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Dalit Literature

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Dr. Sudesh Meera Baliram Bhowate

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Buddhist Influences on Dalit Literature

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Dedicated to
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar who lead us to the path of Buddha & Mahatma Phule & Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

My Father Late Baliram Urkuda Bhowate, one of the grass-root level campaigner for Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar during the by-election of 1954 in Bhandara.

And to all authors who dedicated their life to the new literature inspired after Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar upholding the teachings of Buddha and for their unstinting efforts towards social justice

Contents

Dedication

Contents

Acknowledgements viii

Preface xii

Introduction 1

1. Emergence of Dalit Literature 11

2. Buddha's Dhamma and Dr. Ambedkar's Revival of Buddhism 73

3. Dalit Poetry and Buddhism 126

4. Dalit Autobiography and Buddhism 178

5. Dalit Aesthetics and Buddhism 245

6. Conclusion 291

Bibliography 306

Index 327

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Finally, I am grateful to all those who contributed, either directly or indirectly, to the successful completion of my current research.

❀ Metta to All ❀

Preface

I feel a profound sense of joy as I wrap up the final touches on my book, "Buddhist Influences on Dalit Literature," in preparation for its publication. This work, distinct from my earlier publications save for my critical examination of *Joothan*, encapsulates my personal exploration of Buddhism and Ambedkarism along with the history of Dalits and their literature. My journey into the realms of Buddhism and Ambedkar's thought began in my school days, nurtured by my family's rich reading culture. I'm particularly grateful to the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Public Library in my hometown of Deori, where my father proudly served as founding president for nearly two decades. When I transitioned from studying science to the humanities, I found myself deeply immersed in Dalit literature, most of which I had borrowed from that very library. This period was marked by my achievements in the National Essay Competition focused on Buddhism, organized by the Panna Metta Sangha in Nagpur, where I won consecutively for two years.

For years, my reading interests have gravitated around Buddhism, Ambedkar's thoughts, and Dalit literature. I find it truly enchanting to explore the transformation of Dalit communities following their conversion to Buddhism in 1956, as narrated through the autobiographies of Dalits themselves. I've identified three significant phases in Dalit history: the pre-Ambedkar phase, lasting hundreds of years, where Dalits faced marginalization and loss of dignity; the Ambedkar period, from he appeared before Southborough

Commission of 27 January 1919 until the historic conversion in 1956, marked by mass mobilization and self-awareness led by Dr. Ambedkar; and lastly, the post-Ambedkar phase from 1956 to today, characterized by a monumental shift brought about through education, employment, and the constitutional protections articulated by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and the rich tapestry of Buddhist culture.

My first encounter with Dalit literature, especially poetry, led me to perceive it primarily as a voice of anger and protest against injustices faced by Dalits. This perspective was shaped largely by a few Dalit poems included in my high school Marathi curriculum. However, as I've delved deeper into this body of work over time, I discovered the profound beauty embedded in Dalit imagery and symbolism. These elements resonate with Buddhist themes and the rational philosophies voiced by historical thinkers and social reformers advocating for equality and social justice. Dalit literature serves as a platform for all those ideologues who dedicated their lives to the upliftment of marginalized and outcaste communities throughout India. It's important to note that the struggle for justice is not confined to the untouchable communities alone; it also encompasses individuals from backward classes who, by coincidence, hold positions within the Varnashrama system. This literature embraces icons from various backgrounds who have championed the cause of liberation and welfare for the disadvantaged.

My extensive readings of many Dalit writers who find themselves parallels with Afro-American literature and global protest literature, have been creating the literature centering human, especially the one who is oppressed in the typical Indian Social Hierarchy aroused from the *Varnashrama*. The

early protest narratives in Buddhist texts like the *Theragatha* and *Therigatha*, alongside the saint literature of figures like Chokhamela, intertwine with the modern movements inspired by leaders such as Mahatma Phule, Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur, Iyothi Thass, Narayana Guru, Birsa Munda, Dr. Ambedkar, Periyar Ramasamy Naikar, and many unsung heroes depicted in Dalit creative expressions. Through such explorations, Dalit literature emerges as a rich blend of philosophical protest, rooted in the Buddhist principles of peace, compassion, and the journey toward Nibbana. During my initial readings, I was struck by how Dalit literature embodies the concept of the Sky Blue Ocean, symbolized by the flag of the Republican Party of India initiated by Dr. Ambedkar, while also embracing the five-colored Panchashila Flag recognized by global Buddhists. Consequently, Dalit protests and celebratory marches beautifully showcase the fusion of both flags. It was truly enlightening to realize not only the significance of this amalgamation of philosophies within Dalit literature and mass movements, but also the commitment to non-violence, deeply intertwined with its Buddhist roots.

The current research forms a part of my initial explorations: first, delving into the historical tracing of Dalits guided by Dr. Ambedkar's Indological work and the support from modern archaeological and literary methods; second, examining the influence of Buddhism on Dalit creative writers; and third, investigating the relationship between Dalit aesthetics and Buddhist aesthetics. I recall spending considerable time developing my views through extensive research on the various texts I intended to explore. My writing faced delays due to my indecision on numerous topics, such as the Aryan Invasion Theory. Within Dalit literature,

numerous historical issues often spark debate, leading to divisions among writers. The discourse surrounding Karl Marx within Dalit literature frequently resurfaces. Notably, the prominent Dalit writers of the 1970s and 1980s were often divided into two factions, particularly regarding whether Marxist ideology should be integrated into the Dalit movement. Many Dalit writers expressed resistance to the application of Marxist thought over the philosophies of Dr. Ambedkar and Buddha, which lay at the heart of the literary movement.

I quickly found resolution on these contentious issues, recognizing the guiding philosophies of Buddha, Phule, Shahu, and Dr. Ambedkar as fundamental to my literary exploration. My guide, Dr. Shoma Sen, was aware of my uncertainties, as was my earlier mentor, Dr. Vandana Pathak. Dr. Sen urged me to focus, pointing out that I had spent too much time in reading history alone without sufficient writing. She also advised against seeking extensions, stressing that prolonged timelines would not contribute to the completion of my research. Previously, Dr. Pathak had cautioned me against incorporating the topic of aesthetics into the current research, as it necessitates distinct focus. However, my initial quest is integral to the overall structure of this project, which is why I was determined to follow through on my original plan. During my earlier research project, I developed an interest in Dalit aesthetics, and I aimed to explore this by comparing it with Buddhist aesthetics. At the same time, I planned to examine the themes of rejection, negation, and protest as core aspects of the Dalit literary movement in one of my chapters. I understood that the topic was broad and that I risked losing focus during my study; however, I stayed clear about the objectives outlined in my research plan. Therefore, I was

confident I could engage deeply with the subject without becoming overwhelmed. I am grateful to both of these remarkable teachers for providing the clarity of thought I desperately needed during our discussions. While my research primarily centered on identifying the principles of Buddhist philosophy in Dalit poetry and autobiography, however Dr. Sen's recommendation to delve into the Buddhist symbology in addition to my decided scheme within Dalit literature turned out to be the most intriguing part of my study. However, I encountered challenges due to the limited availability of translated works at that time. Consequently, I took it upon myself to translate numerous stanzas from the original Marathi texts of Dalit poetry for my analysis.

I had a strong connection with the late Dr. Omprakash Valmikiji, particularly during my work on his autobiography, Joothan. This was the same year he came to Nagpur for his office duties at the Ordinance Factory in Ambazari (2007). I had the privilege of meeting him three times between 2007 and 20212. During his nearly 15-day stay in Nagpur, I was fortunate to engage in discussions with him about Dalit poetry and autobiographies. He enlightened me on how Buddhist symbols within Dalit poetry link the Dalit movement to the Buddhist philosophy of rationalism. Conversely, following the conversion in 1956, a significant number of Dalits adopted Buddhism and integrated its cultural practices into their daily lives. In our interview, Valmikiji disclosed that his autobiography contains Buddhist references, as he had internalized both Ambedkar's thoughts and Buddhism. (Refer to the book 'A Critical Analysis of Omprakash Valmiki's Joothan' by Dr. Sudesh M. B. Bhowate, Question no. 20 in Annexure III.) Beyond the interview, Dr. Valmiki and I explored a wide range of topics

concerning the various images and symbols present in Dalit poetry. A key focus of our discussion was the myths in Dalit literature, which were also addressed in the interview. In my current work, I have applied my understanding of these myths in Dalit literature based on my conversations with Valmikiji. He indicated that all Hindu mythical figures, such as Dronacharya, are portrayed negatively in Dalit literature, particularly because he demanded a thumb from Ekalavya, who was considered a rival to Arjuna. Throughout our week-long discussion, I was introduced to the local Dalit poet Loknath Yashwant, who has since become a close friend. Since 2007, I have frequently conversed with Loknathji about his poetic ideas, as he is renowned for his sharp sarcasm and irony in poetry. He has also, on numerous occasions, shared his thoughts on the imagery used in poetry, including Buddhist imagery. In one of his poems, Loknathji recounted an incident involving a bonsai Pipal tree; the narrator planted it in the soil, and it thrived. (Buddha attained enlightenment under Pipal tree, at Bodh Gaya, making it sacred to Buddhists). Loknathji shared numerous anecdotes from his observations that undoubtedly influence his poetry. His comprehension of Buddhism transcends mere spiritual interpretation; he perceives Buddha through the lens of Dr. Ambedkar's viewpoints. Consequently, he made a sarcastic remark about individuals who participate in Vipassana meditation. His concern may not lie with the substantial attendance at Vipassana, but rather with the reality that these individuals do not voice their dissent against injustices faced by their community. Profound discussion with Valmikiji and Loknathji helped me understand the poetry of first generation writers. I had the opportunity to engage also with poet Prof. Waman Nimbalkarji during the preparations for the All India

Dalit Sahitya Sammelana in Nagpur, under his proficient leadership. I had a brief conversation with him regarding my research on Buddhism and Dalit poetry. In summary, he stated that their writings are fundamentally about Buddhism. Regrettably, I was unable to meet him again as he passed away shortly before the Sammelana. I must also mention my interactions with Professor Dr. Yashwant Manohar, a pioneering writer of Dalit poetry. As a student, I encountered him on the RTM Nagpur University campus and at his home, and on a few occasions, he was invited to my college, where I had the chance to discuss his poetry, which I considered a primary source for my current work. Simultaneously, I reflected on several books he authored on aesthetics, which greatly assisted me in writing my chapter on Dalit Aesthetics and Buddhism. Dr. Manohar is recognized for his early poetry that gives voice to Dalit experiences; however, over time, his poetry and non-fiction have increasingly focused on interpreting Ambedkar's philosophy concerning the Dalit movement. His body of work encompasses a vast array of literature, including poetry, critical essays, short stories, novels, and historical and philosophical writings, as well as his reflections on aesthetics in general and new ideas in aesthetics that center around rationalism and a scientific perspective. Whether subtly or explicitly, his writings on aesthetics often explore the beauty inherent in Buddhist art.

Readers may find themselves questioning why I chose to delve into the broader history of the Dalit community. Many, whether from India or abroad, are aware of the marginalization faced by Dalits, yet they may not grasp the historical context of the dehumanization they have endured. While discussions often reference ancient texts like the Manusmriti, which have been linked to the establishment of

a graded society, it raises an essential question: Can a single text be solely responsible for the intricate caste classifications? The roots of sectarian radicalism run deep, with numerous factors contributing to the displacement of civil communities and the enslavement of others through casteism over the centuries. The experience of Dalitness represents profound suffering, a state where individuals are stripped of their dignity and fundamental rights. The notion of caste superiority has perpetuated an unequal society, branding one community as lesser and denying them the right to live with dignity and pursue socio-economic advancement. The anguish of being Dalit in this nation is both unique and outright unjustifiable. When our identities are reduced to mere labels—names, surnames, skin color, caste, locality, clothing, and occupation—it creates a prison from which generations cannot escape. As a result, many remain trapped in cycles of poverty and despair, bound to occupations that reinforce their marginalized status for countless years. To truly understand their plight, we must explore history and ask: What factors led to their disadvantaged position as Dalits? Did they ever experience a life of dignity? Did they not possess their own rich culture and traditions? Until recently, attempts to sincerely trace their history were largely absent, even during the era of Oriental research. Interestingly, Buddhism, once a dominant religion in the region, seems to have left few traces, despite its significance. This raises further questions: How did a community once so integral to society find itself in the shadows? How can a major religion none other than Buddhism, once embraced by these communities, have suffered such decline? A researcher delving into Dalit literature should understand the historical connection between Dalits and Buddhism. This book aims to trace that

relationship, which saw a revival in modern times through the influence of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. The first two chapters are divided into two main sections each, focusing on answering key questions about how contemporary Dalits and their literature ties back to Buddhism. This is examined further through the lens of cultural transformation among Dalit communities, highlighting the growth and development of neo-Buddhists, previously considered untouchables.

In this work, the author ventures into the intersection of Buddhism and Dalit literature, a field that has been explored much in literary research earlier. The objective of this research is to provide a deeper understanding of the historical narrative surrounding Dalitness as it pertains to certain communities, particularly those who embraced Buddhism from a fresh perspective, encapsulated in the concept of 'Navayana Buddhism' introduced by Dr. Ambedkar.

As the book is grounded in academic research, the author acknowledges the limitations of adopting a creative approach in the narrative and discussions to maintain objectivity. This may have contributed to a more traditional historical analysis of the topic. The author welcomes readers to share suggestions or corrections, acknowledging that there may be errors in the text, which could be addressed in future editions.

Nagpur Dr. Sudesh M. B. Bhowate

Introduction

Dalit literature serves as a powerful and passionate response from those who have faced untouchability, marginalization, and oppression due to the caste-based discrimination embedded in India's social hierarchy (Varnashrama). It highlights the harsh realities within the Indian social system, where individuals from the untouchable and backward communities have been subjected to inhumane treatment, stripped of their rights, and forced to live on the fringes of society. This body of work not only documents the atrocities experienced by Dalits but also confronts the unjust and irrational nature of the caste system itself. Inspired by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and energized by his monumental conversion to Buddhism in 1956, many educated young Dalits are now giving voice to their suppressed feelings. Through various literary forms such as poetry, short stories, novels, autobiographies, plays, and essays, Dalit literature delves into the present and past experiences of Dalits, drawing parallels with the struggles of Afro-Americans facing marginalization. Dalit writers have crafted a rich literary canon that champions themes of equality, dignity, and equal opportunity. On October 14, 1956, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar adopted Buddhism alongside millions of his followers, firmly believing that it could uplift and empower oppressed Dalits. He viewed Buddhism as a means for

Dalits to cultivate a life of dignity. Following in Dr. Ambedkar's footsteps, many Dalit thinkers and writers now advocate that the Buddha's philosophy—in essence, a guide to living—offers a way toward human development free from the shackles of caste, creed, and hierarchical discrimination, both now and in the future. Central to Buddha's teachings is the individual, with a focus on core human values such as equality, liberty, fraternity, morality, justice, and equal opportunity, all of which resonate deeply within Dalit literature. Beyond Dr. Ambedkar and Buddha, figures such as Mahatma Phule, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Periyar Ramasamy, Iyothi Thass, and Narayana Guru have also played pivotal roles in the fight against caste-based injustice and have been significant sources of inspiration for Dalit writers.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's mass conversion of 1956 marked a pivotal moment for the Dalits in India, transforming their socio-cultural landscape. With this shift, the pantheon of deities was replaced by the reverence for Buddha and the principles of Dhamma. This transition profoundly influenced Dalit literary expression. Alongside Dr. Ambedkar, Buddha holds a significant place in their narratives. Dalit literature has drawn a clear distinction between life before and after the adoption of Buddhism. Whether through poetry, autobiographies, novels, short stories, or essays, Dalit writers candidly portray their harrowing experiences within the restrictive Indian social hierarchy and reflect on the transformative journey following their embrace of Buddhism. For the Buddhists, Buddhism represents not just a set of beliefs but an art of living—a philosophy wholeheartedly embraced by Dalits post-conversion.

Key tenets such as Buddha's Five Precepts, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the Principle of

Cause and Effect (Pratityasamutpada), and the Twenty-Two Vows articulated by Dr. Ambedkar, all rooted in Buddhist teachings, have significantly shaped the lives of Dalits and informed their literary works. Numerous references to Buddhism are woven throughout Dalit creative literature. It's fascinating to explore the impact of Buddhism on these writings through the rich use of symbols, imagery, culture, and traditions, which resonate deeply within Dalit literature.

Dalit literature has been examined primarily through the lens of its socio-cultural aspects and values, as defined by Dalit writers themselves. While there have been efforts to analyze this literature using frameworks like Marxist theory, existential philosophy, and post-structuralism, these approaches have certain limitations when considered within the context of the Indian caste system. Over the past six to seven decades, Dalit writers have established their own criteria for interpretation, focusing on elements such as Dalit consciousness, themes of rejection and acceptance, the nature of protest, and the beauty found in the sufferings and struggles of Dalits. These criteria collectively contribute to the aesthetics of Dalit literature, heavily influenced by the thought of Ambedkar. However, the significant impact of Buddhism and its philosophies on Dalit literary criticism has yet to be fully explored. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate new dimensions of critical frameworks through the lens of Buddhism, connecting it with the experiences and literary history of Dalits. This inquiry will encompass aspects such as Dalit poetry, autobiographical narratives, and the aesthetics of Dalit literature as a cohesive whole. In this context, this research centers on Buddhism as a key influence. It aims to uncover the connections between Dalit criticism and aesthetics and the teachings and culture of Buddhism, particularly as they became relevant following the conversion of many Dalits in India.

To conduct this study on the perspectives of Buddhism and its cultural context, this work aims to trace the historical narrative of the Dalit community and provide a concise overview of Dalit literature. Research concerning Dalits during historical periods often references Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's extensive work, but it is important to note that there are differing views among Dalit scholars regarding the emergence of untouchability in India. This research delves into these historical developments, drawing from Dr. Ambedkar's indological studies, specifically his writings such as "*Who Were the Shudras*?", "*The Untouchables*," "*Revolution and Counter-Revolutions*," and various articles that connect Indian history with Dalit identity.

According to Dr. Ambedkar's theory, Dalits in India originated from ancient Naga tribes who were influenced by the teachings of Buddha. For centuries, they embraced Buddhism, acting as its steadfast protectors and advocates, disseminating its principles across India. Dr. Ambedkar also introduced the concept of '*Broken Men'*, referring to warrior nomads who eventually settled after prolonged periods of wandering. Upon establishing themselves, they engaged in agriculture and developed culturally and politically as a community. However, the subsequent migration of nomadic tribes led to their displacement, pushing them to the fringes of society. These marginalized individuals became what we now identify as '*Broken Men'*, residing on the outskirts of villages (akin to today's Scheduled Castes) while others retreated into dense jungles (likely today's Scheduled Tribes).

Over time, the new settlers recognized the value of these displaced individuals, utilizing them as protection against further invasions. This inevitable interaction between the displaced and the settlers failed to restore the former's social standing, resulting in a permanent loss of status. According

to Dr. Ambedkar, these displaced communities evolved into modern "untouchables," who, since the era of Buddha, have adhered to Buddhist principles until they were classified as atishudras within the traditional Indian social hierarchy, known as Varnashram. For centuries, these groups were severed from the mainstream, causing a disconnection from Buddhism. Ironically, in their quest for acceptance, they began to mimic mainstream religious beliefs, where they were denied equal status. In light of Dr. Ambedkar's theories on *the Ancient Nagas* and *the Broken Men*, the author of this book felt the need to explore the evolution of Buddhism and its culture, seeking a reintroduction of Dalits to Buddhism. Historical developments surrounding this theme are discussed in separate chapters to better understand the cultural transformation of present-day Dalits. Dr. Ambedkar along with his Dalit brethren embraced Buddhism in 1956. Together they accepted twenty two vows suggested by him at the time of conversion; therefore, a massive socio-cultural change occurred in the life of Dalits. Due to awareness of education among them, these people adopted Buddha's Philosophy of rationalism and scientific point of view. As a matter of change in their life, earlier these people who were worshiper of Gods and goddesses, believed in souls, good and bad spirits, salvation after death, different religious traditions etc. Now in the influence of Dr. Ambedkar all these superstitious elements have been abandoned and these people reintroduced to Buddhist tradition and culture into their own day to day life.

The emergence of Dalit literature is deeply intertwined with Dr. Ambedkar's quest for emancipation, which also connects to the social movement initiated by Mahatma Phule. When we delve into history, we can trace the roots of 'Dalit consciousnesses back to the medieval era, reflected in the works of saints like Chokhamela and influenced by

Buddhism in the abhangas of Tukaram. Dalit poetry serves not only to express the suffering of Dalits but also embodies a spirit of rebellion against the varnashrama system. It draws heavily on the rationalist philosophies of Buddha and the twenty-two vows articulated by Dr. Ambedkar. This form of poetry champions justice and equality for the oppressed, while simultaneously incorporating Buddhist themes and ideologies. The presence of Buddha, his teachings, and the influential figures of his time—along with various Buddhist texts and monuments—are prevalent motifs within Dalit poetry. Moreover, the narratives in Dalit autobiographies reflect the transformative journeys of their protagonists, illustrating a movement from being to becoming, with Buddhist philosophy playing a crucial role in this metamorphosis.

The effects of Buddhism and the Buddhist lifestyle are notably significant among neo-Buddhist communities following their conversion. Numerous Dalit writers subtly or overtly infuse their works with Buddhist principles and cultural values. As Buddhism became integrated into Dalit literature, the imagery, symbolism, and myths underwent a transformative evolution. Consequently, a focused study was necessary to trace the impact of Buddhist philosophy on Dalit literary expression. This research aims to conduct a thorough examination of how Buddhist philosophy influences Dalit poetry and autobiography, along with its aesthetic dimensions, through selected texts. The subsequent chapters are structured in a historical timeline that facilitates a deeper analysis of these Dalit literary works while exploring the author's pursuit to understand the nuances of Buddhist influence.

Chapter one is categorized into two main sections. The first focuses on the Dalits and their historical roots, while the second delves into the evolution of Dalit literature over

recent decades. In the initial section, various definitions of Dalits are examined. To trace the historical context of Dalits, two methodologies are employed: archaeological and literary studies. The archaeological approach discusses the Indus civilization, exploring its social stratification and how it relates to the development of low communities in prehistory. Meanwhile, the literary approach engages with Dr. Ambedkar's theories, particularly referencing his influential work, "*The Untouchables*," where the condition of marginalized individuals is analyzed as the foundation for understanding today's Dalits.

The second section of this chapter studies Dalit literature, charting its development from the time of the Buddha through the medieval period to the modern era. It also looks at the inspirations and influences that have shaped Dalit literature, referencing notable historical figures and social theories. Towards the end, various genres of Dalit literature are briefly explored, along with prominent authors in the field.

Chapter two centers around Buddhism and its philosophical underpinnings. The first portion details the historical development of Buddhism, examining the socio-religious and cultural contexts as well as the contemporary religious philosophies that shaped its evolution. This section also highlights key philosophical concepts inherent to Buddhism. In addressing the rise and fall of Buddhism, the chapter underscores its revival in central India spearheaded by Dr. Ambedkar. The latter half of this chapter focuses on the significant event in 1956 when Dr. Ambedkar led the conversion of Dalits to Buddhism, marking the beginning of a rich era of Dalit literary expression. As part of this transition, Dr. Ambedkar introduced twenty-two additional vows to the Dalits, which influenced the literary movement's

direction regarding acceptance and rejection of various cultural elements.

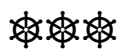
Chapter three delves into the relationship between Dalit Poetry and Buddhism. It begins with a brief overview of the history of Dalit poetry, providing insight into its unique form and essence. The roots of Dalit poetry can be traced back to ancient Buddhist texts and the medieval saint literature of India. This section explores the themes, concerns, and narrative style that set Dalit poetry apart. In the latter half, selected pieces of Dalit poetry are examined through the lens of Buddhist philosophy, touching on concepts such as *suffering, the Noble Eightfold Path, impermanence, the belief in non-soul, Nibbana, rationality, humanism, and ethical values.* To strengthen the arguments presented, a free translation approach is applied to some Marathi Dalit poetry that remains untranslated in English. The chapter also investigates the use of Buddhist symbolism within selected works to demonstrate the profound impact of Buddhist philosophy on Dalit poetry.

Chapter four focuses on Dalit Autobiography and its connection to Buddhism. It starts with a broader exploration of autobiography as a literary genre, particularly in relation to the oppressed. This section discusses the presence of autobiographical narratives in Buddhism, as well as in both medieval and modern Indian contexts. The latter part centers on the evolution of Dalit autobiography, particularly against the backdrop of Dr. Ambedkar's movements and the transformation of the Dalit community into a Buddhist community. A brief survey of Dalit autobiographies, penned by both men and women in Marathi and other regional languages, is included. The final section analyzes and discusses selected Dalit autobiographies in light of key Buddhist philosophy principles such as suffering, ignorance, the Noble Eightfold Path which encompasses wisdom, moral

conduct, and Samadhi, Nibbana, impermanence, non-soul, rationality, humanism, and ethical values. Additionally, the analysis addresses the influence of Buddhist culture, including emerging traditions and practices, creative literature, and performing arts among Neo-Buddhists, alongside the symbolic references found in Dalit autobiography.

Chapter five focuses on the intersection of Dalit Aesthetics and Buddhism. It opens with a discussion of contemporary debates surrounding Dalit Aesthetics, carefully examining various criticisms aimed at Dalit literature and its aesthetic approaches. This analysis aims to clarify the calls for a distinct Dalit aesthetic, as articulated by Dalit writers themselves. The chapter also compares concepts of aesthetics within Western and Indian literary contexts. Further along, it dives into the Dalit literary aesthetic frameworks proposed by significant writers such as Sharankumar Limbale, Omprakash Valmiki, Dr. Yashwant Manohar, Dr. Gangadhar Pantavne, and Waman Nimbalkar. It sheds light on how Dalit authors respond to conventional literature and explores the nature of authorship in Dalit literature. Key elements that could foster Dalit aesthetics—such as Dalitness, Dalit Consciousness, rejection, protest, suffering, agitation, and revolt are discussed, particularly in relation to the influence of Buddhist philosophy, especially its humanistic values. In the latter sections, the chapter explores the language of Dalit literature and its aesthetic values, the reinterpreted meanings of myths, and the implications of concepts like Satyam, Shivam, and Sundaram in Dalit works. The motivations driving Dalit literature are analyzed using secondary sources. With the recognition of Dalit aesthetics as a fresh theoretical approach in the literary sphere, its form and significance are thoroughly examined.

In the conclusion, the chapter synthesizes an in-depth analysis of Dalit literary history, Buddhist philosophy, Dalit poetry, autobiography, and criticism across five separate chapters. By including a review of the literature in the introduction, it offers a comprehensive impression of the historical trajectory of caste discrimination and the role Buddhism has played in supporting the Dalit community.



One

Emergence of Dalit Literature

Part I

Meaning of Connotation 'Dalit':

History of Dalit Literature begins with the first question who is a Dalit and where the Dalitness comes from? The Typical Indian Social Hierarchy i.e. Chaturvarna System had a twofold pattern Savarna and Avarnas. Purushsukta Sutta of Rigveda gives the four fold sections of society i.e. Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra, all of these four sections were Savarnas i.e. touchable, whereas atishudra or untouchables were kept out this system. "The Untouchable is outside the scheme of creation." (Moon 1990: p279) In Vedas they were referred as antyaj or panchmas. These untouchable people later known as Dalits in India, were earlier called as avarnas, ashprushyas, atisudras, parihas, achut, etc.

Since untouchability in the country was abolished by the Constitution of independent India, the use of the word untouchable was also prohibited. Under the Article 17 in the Fundamental Rights of The Constitution of India "Untouchability" is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. "The enforcement of any disability arising out of Untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance

with law". (Government of India 2007: p7) Therefore, to avoid connotation untouchable, the term 'Dalit' seems to be popularized by Dalit writers and intellectuals in the post-independence era. Mahatma Gandhi popularizes the term Harijan and avoided terms like untouchables.

The Student's Sanskrit Dictionary defines "Dalit as broken, torn, burst, split." (Apte 2010: p247) The coinage of the term 'Dalit' synonymous to Depressed Classes which was used by British Government in India was to identify certain communities. Later British Government started using term Scheduled caste. Mahatma Jotirao Phule "seems to have been the first to use the word Dalit in connection with caste in the term Dalitodhar (uplift of the depressed)" (Zelliot 2010: p271). Dr. Ambedkar popularized this term through his periodicals like Bahiskrut Bharat and Janata. Dr. Ambedkar himself avoided the usage of the word untouchable. He uses alternative expressions. "He had used the terms "depressed classes" and "Scheduled caste" for untouchable and Dalit class is synonymous to it. The term Dalit first occurred in Bahiskrut Bharat (Run by Dr. Ambedkar) issue of 16th November 1928. In the column occasional Thought, the word Dalit occurs four times." (Manohar 1993: p114) Later this term was used in P.N. Rajbhoj's monthly magazine Dalitbandhu (1928) and in Dalit Sewak Sahitya Sangha (1948)

Some Definitions for the connotation Dalit by notable writers and critics are as follows:

i. According to Tarkatirth Lakshaman Shastrti Joshi, Dalit is that social class which has been pushed most backwards in human progress. A class that is last in human progress and pushed most backward in the society is Dalit. (Nimbalkar 2006: p29).

ii. Waman Nimbalkar defines "Dalit meant an untouchable in chatturvarna. One who has been exploited socially, financially, religiously, and culturally in the name of god and religion. A Dalit is one who by being refused the values of equality, freedom, fraternity and justice, has been made to lead an animal and inhuman existence in the name of god and religion, rituals and other means of bookish knowledge."(Nimbalkar 2006: p29).

iii. According to Ellinor Zelliot, "Dalit implies those who have been broken, ground down by those above them in a deliberate and active way. There is in the word itself an inherent denial of pollution, karma and justified caste hierarchy". (Zelliot 2010: p267).

iv. Dalit Panthars a militant organization which was founded by Dalit writers Namdeo Dhasal and Raja Dhale in 1972 expanded its meaning and scope, "Members of scheduled castes and tribes, Neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion". (Panthers 2002-2013:p ix)

v. Omprakash Valmiki defines Dalit as; "connotation of Dalit is used for such a person who is at the bottom of the social system. He was categorized as untouchable or antyaj. He was depressed. Such exploited communities born as untouchables which were identified as scheduled caste by the constitution of India". (Valmiki 2005: p 14)

The term Dalit though it reflects caste or low status of some communities, today it becomes their socio-political identity too. In 1960s Afro-Americans started a cultural movement that was "Black is beautiful" to undo all negative

perception to the word black under white supremacy. Similarly, the meaning of Dalit has undergone change after Dr. Ambedkar's movements. Many Dalit writers find aesthetic beauty in the term. Noted Dalit Writer Baburao Bagul redefines it, "Dalit means one who wants to destroy the system of Varna in the society along with its complete base... Dalit means one who wants to restructure the world and life... Dalit means one whose hands in this age have been made intelligent and transformative and for whom all weapons and sciences have been made available". (Nimbalkar 2006: p30) The connotation Dalit defined aforesaid is the guiding thread to identify the oppressed and marginalized in the whole system of Caste and Varna practiced in India. The same is kept at the Centre in Dalit literary writings.

Tracing Dalit in History

Beginning Dalit literary outcome was prominently seen in Maharashtra during Post-Independence times and immediately after Mass Conversion of formerly Dalit Hindus into Buddhism by Dr. Ambedkar in 1956. During seventies and eighties it spread like a wild fire in the other regional languages like, Hindi, Tamil, Telgu, Malayalam, Gujarati, and Panjabi. Everywhere Dalit literature keeps Dalit and Dalit's life at its Centre. Every form of its literature truthfully reflects the inner Dalit consciousness which is its essential character. Dalit consciousness is the outcome of Dalit's historical degeneration into untouchability. The place of Dalits in Indian social system, especially in Chaturvarna System was not only at the state of utmost degradation but they were not considered in the four fold system. Dalits degeneration occurs historically in phases or in a systematic process. Why a particular section of the society was kept out of the Varna System is the real socio-cultural and anthropological issue. History doesn't have a concrete

record of their subjugation but plenty of historical elements speak their history clearly. Sociologists, historians, anthropologists, and scholars from the various other disciplines shed light on the history of Dalits. Dr. Ambedkar's socio-cultural and anthropological research was also based on Indian social system and place of Shudras and Untouchables in it. Scholars are in agreement that the Dalits in every corner of India were indigenous tribes. Their presence in Indian subcontinent could be traced back to the pre-historic times through the evidences found in various archeological sites including Indus civilization and historical documents. Therefore, a systematic study of process of civilization in India in locating Dalit problem is essential especially when it concerns Dalit literature.

Process of civilization brought out the categories of men. A category of men in the other part of the world is based on occupation or on guilds, but in India it is based on the birth in a particular caste. Caste system was systematically developed in Indian Scriptures i.e. in historical Vedas, Shrutis and Smritis and brought into strict practice all over the country.

Process of Civilization in India:

Indian civilization is one of the oldest civilization in the world, perhaps it is oldest than Mesopotamia and Egypt. Discovery of pre-historic human activity in India through Mohenjo Daro and Harappa establishes a fact that India was the habitat of earliest human races in the world. To understand the pre-historic India one has to rely on archeological evidences. Excavations at Indus valley and other part of the Indian states open a wide area of research about the distant past life. Excavation at Indus valley and other sites in India in 1921 onwards brightened the possibility of understanding the roots of aboriginal Indians. It has been a well-established fact that India was the home of

pre-historic Proto-Asteroid and Negreto tribes. Indian civilization before 5000 B.C. was highly developed and it was flourished parallel to those of Mesopotamia and Greek civilization of the times.

The significant progress of man was seen in Neolithic Period between 6000 BC and 2500 BC. Neolithic Age in India was seen as the revolution in agriculture and domestication of cattle, horses and other farm animals. Also polishing of stone tools and the manufacture of pottery is evident in the age. Such developments must have occurred where men and women strive hard to raise their level of living.

> "It may have been accelerated in areas experiencing a change in the environment as also by the ingenuity of men and women attempting improvements in their way of life. But its ultimate effects, inasmuch as it changed the process of obtaining food and establishing new types of links between humans, animals and land was revolutionary". (Thapar 1992: p74-75)

Wheat, Barley, Rice and Millet were discovered in the age and men developed techniques its cultivation for larger production. According to Romila Thapar in this age women discovered the techniques of agriculture: "The suggestion that the transition to agriculture was made by women, who stayed home while the men hunted, is plausible". (Thapar 1992: p75) This was the age much before Indus Valley Civilization (Mohen Jo Daro) when few groups were settled down for agriculture and still some groups were nomadic raiders. It seems during this period nomadic group and settled groups must have had tough clash where the former overpowered on the later. Dr. Ambedkar most probably indicated these wars in his famous book *Who were the Shudras?* These wars resulted into the displacement of settled tribes to the periphery of the villages.

Indus Valley Civilization:

The Indus valley civilization is considered to be developed in the Bronze Age. In the year 1922 ASI director General, Alexander Cunningham and team members brought into light the ruins of Indus civilization. The civilization is considered to have flourished between 3300 and1300 BCE. The Pre-Harappa sites were also discovered during the same time in Mehrgarh in Baluchistan dated to be existed between 7000 and 5500 BCE. Indus civilization is also called as Harappa civilization. It was known as land of Meluha in Mesopotamian records and Al-hind means land beyond the Sindh River in Middle East in the antiquity. Since it was developed in the basin of Indus river it is held as one of the riverine culture and cradles of civilization. "The main language was almost certainly Dravidian." (Omvedt 2011: p38) The Indus civilization is important in the light of world's first urban center in this part as well as first city based drainage system.

Before the excavation of Indus Civilization sites (in Punjab and Sindh in 1920-21), Aryans culture was held superior. But the Indus civilization shows that it was not only advance civilization than those of Aryans but also had well established economic communication with Persia and Mesopotamia. According to John Marshall who was one of the pioneers of archeological survey of India expresses his views about Indus civilization as:

> "...Hitherto India has almost universally been regarded as one of the younger countries of the world...now, at a single bound, we have taken back our knowledge of endian civilization some 3000 years earlier and have established the fact that in the 3rd millennium before Christ and even before that the people of Punjab and Sindh were living in well-built cities and were in possession of a relatively mature culture with a high standard of art and craftsmanship and developed a system of pictorial art at Harappa in Montgomery District of Punjab

> and Mohenjo-Daro, more than 400 miles away, in the Larkana District Sindh". (Massey 2009: p30)

According to Walter A. Fairservice Jr, "It does suggest that the Indus valley civilization was an indigenous development that arouse out of the evolution of developed village cultures in a favorable environment." (Massey 2009: p 31)

Governance and Social Division in Indus:

The Indus civilization also indicates that the existence of more than one city was the evidence of politically aware society, therefore, existence of state can't be denied. Since it was the agrarian society producing the surplus, therefore, it must have well established division of class. As D.D. Kosambi opined that the social division did exist in the Harappa civilization. He didn't deny the dominance of one class upon the other:

On the basis of city structure, well-defined governance is thought to be existed. "The city was well administered by a class of wealthy merchants and priests. There was some kind of municipal organization. It took care of sanitation and regulated trade. It collected taxes in the form of grains and also maintained law and order in the city." (www.indiaandindians.com, 2016) Also the society of Indus was classified into three major classes, ruling class, artisan and merchants' class and labour and farmer class. "There were three social groups. The first group or the ruling class lived in the citadel. It comprised of wealthy merchants and the high priests. The second group consisted of petty merchants, artisans arid craftsmen. The laborers belonged to the third group and lived in small huts. Generally speaking, the social organization was more definite." (www.indiaandindians.com, 2016) Commenting upon the social classes in the Indus civilization, archeologist Jonathan Mark Kenoyer also maintains the same stand that the social

stratification existed in Harappa civilization though he was sure that the stratification was not similar to Varna system of the Vedas.

According to Gail Omvedt, "while there is as yet no direct evidence regarding the social system of Harappans, there is indirect evidence that the proto-caste features of sub continental and Dravidian culture were carried forward among them." (Omvedt 2011: p39)

Mohenjo daro and Harappa cities were the business centres established merchandise through sea routes to Babylon, Sumer and Mesopotamia. A large number of agriculture produce gathered here from the surrounding regions. Granaries in both the cities are the evidence of the same. In this case a possibility cannot be denied that a large number of poor labours and lower status men were employed. Commenting upon the major division of society in that situation, Walter Fairservice maintains that "it was clearly a stratified society, with large and small houses indicating a major division into rich and poor. Yet the relative weak development of weapons and the absence of other evidences of state machinery suggest that the major integrating role was played by cultural-religious unity rather than state power." (Omvedt, 2011, p38-39) Therefore, importance of religious authority cannot be denied. Similar social division was evident in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt civilizations with the superiority of religious authority over the state affairs.

Religious Beliefs in Indus Civilization

Since the symbols and letters recovered from the Indus civilization has not yet been deciphered it is difficult to draw any conclusion about the religious beliefs if any. The society in Indus civilization was the agrarian one therefore; concepts like fertility must have influence on them. "The discoveries

of a large number of terracotta figurines of an almost nude female have suggested the idea of a village mother goddess." (Dani 1992: p282) "The earlier numerical predominance of female figurine suggests a matrilineal-matricentric heritage." (Omvedt 2011: p39) John Marshall indicated phallus worship and appearance of trees on seals of Indus indicated the people's high respect to the trees and its deities. "Even if these animals were not actually worshipped, an animal spirit appears to have been a component part of religious beliefs and may be seen in the figure of many horned deities." (Dani 1992: p283) The three figures of men also indicate the other elements in the religious beliefs. (i) a bearded man with half close eyes, (ii) a man seated in half kneeling position with his hands on his knees and shawl over the body with the right shoulder bare, and (iii) a man with trimmed beard, half closed eyes looking at the tip of his nose, a head gear, shawl over left shoulder. This man is considered as "*Priest King*".

Archeologists and Historians are in agreements that the people in Indus Civilization were non-Aryan race. According to Ernest Mackey:

> Harappa? No answer can be given at present to this "Who were these people who built Mohenjo-Daro and question, though it is certain that they were a pre- Aryan race, for their cities were flourishing some thousand years before any Aryan Speaking people had entered India, which took place, according to modern ruling about 1500B.C." (Massey 2009: p32)

The absence of any temple and fire sacrifices in Mohenjo Daro and Harappa sites; the Indus society seems to have been untouched of Aryan Culture.

Decline of Indus Civilization:

Various theories have been developed to decode the decline of Indus civilization. A popular theory about the

destruction of Indus civilizations was the invasion of the city by nomadic tribes Aryans in about 1500BC. This theory was based on the skeletons at burial found in a large quantity. But recent scientific revelations on the same skeletons are quite different which raised question marks on the previous theories.

> "Analysis of the skeletons revealed that most of these people had died of diseases such as severe anemia, indicating a different set of reasons for urban decline. Violent deaths in a limited area do not necessarily mean widespread invasion and could be evidence of local disturbances. Diseases or severe environmental changes as factors in weakening a population have not been sufficiently examined in the context of early Indian history." (Thapar 2002: p87)

Archeologist Gurdeep Singh opined: "the extinction of Indus culture may have been initiated through gradual decline as a result of climatic change, but the process may yet have been completed by successive invasions from the North-West by the Aryans." (Massey 2009: p36) Archeologist A. Fairservice Jr. opined to the similar possibility. Yet another theory regarding the Indus civilization was put forward in the recent times that this destruction was due to a series of severe and extensive flood. "The extent to which the degradation of the environment caused the decline of the cities remains unclear. Urban decline can only be properly explained by multiple causes and these were not uniformly applicable to each region." (Thapar 2002: p87)

On the basis of social stratification existed in Indus civilization, class of rich and poor, and in the light of position of labourers at the time was traced, it is indicative of existence of broken men from the earliest times.

Literary Method

In the historical research in case of ancient India two literary sources are generally been used viz. Vedas and records of India from the other ancient civilizations. In four vedas i.e. Rigveda, Atharvaveda, Samveda and Yajurveda and in other scriptures traces of Dalits i.e. formerly untouchables could be seen. In the Vedas there are few references of antya or antyaja. The Hindupedia defines it as Antyaja literally means 'the last-born'. (Harshananda, 2016) Sanskrit dictionary defines it as: "a man of one of seven inferior tribes (a washerman, currier, mimic, varuḍa-, fisherman, meda- or attendant on women, and mountaineer or forester)." (Sanskritdictionary 2016)

For Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, "the word Antya derived from the root anta." (Moon 1990: p278) They are also identified as Avarna i.e. not included in Varna and ashprushya or untouchables. Dr. Ambedkar in his book The Untouchables opined that

> "In my view, the word Antya means not end of creation but end of the village. It is a name given to those people who lived on the outskirts of the village. The word Antya has, therefore, a survival value. It tells us that there was a time when some people lived inside the village and some lived outside the village and that those who lived outside the village, i.e. on the Antya of the village, were called Antyaja." (Moon 1990: p279)

The origin of the untouchables i.e. Dalits in history has very little traces that too on the basis of assumptions and its references in Vedic scriptures. Dr. Ambedkar found these traces important for building his theory of broken men. Since first phase of Indus excavation was already done till his theories on Shudras and Untouchables came out in 1946 and 1948 respectively, but primary assumptions of the

civilization did not appeal him. He was not in favour of Wilson's theory of Aryan Invasion of Indus people whereas on the basis of Vedic scriptures he proposed the theory of shudras were Aryans, supporting the stand of Prof. Weber. In this way he gives little importance to the primary assumptions based on Indus excavations which were contradictory then.

Dr. Ambedkar's Theory of The Broken Men:

Dr. Ambedkar's The Untouchables: Who Were They and Why They Became Untouchables is the pioneering work tracing the origination of formerly untouchables and present day Dalits. In this book Dr. Ambedkar proves that it is the broken men who subsequently came to be treated as untouchables. (Moon 1990: p243) This book is the sequel to his book *Who Were the Shudras? How They came to be the Fourth Varna in the Indo-Aryan Society*. In the former book Dr. Ambedkar takes the reference of pre-historical movements of settled nomadic tribes and the still migratory tribes on the Indian soil. Another additional condition i.e. untouchability made them live outside the village permanently. "The untouchables originally lived outside the village and that thereafter when the stigma of untouchability fell on them they were forced to vacate and lived outside the village." (Moon 1990: p272) Taking sociological basis for developing his theory Dr. Ambedkar found that the primitive society was nomadic because they were migratory for having cattle as their earlier wealth form. In the search of pastures cattle move further so also the primitive society. The primitive society becomes settled when they found the art of agricultural cultivation. So with the fixed wealth of agricultural land primitive society was also settled down at some place.

According to Dr. Ambedkar broken man was the result of primitive tribal wars. He observes: "In a tribal war it often

happened that a tribe instead of being completely annihilated was defeated and routed. In many cases a defeated tribe became broken in bits. As a consequence of this there always existed in primitive times a floating population consisting of groups of broken tribesmen roaming in all directions." (Moon 1990: p275) The broken men then seems to be the agricultural community settled earlier and later displaced by other nomadic tribes and become homeless. Shelter and safety were always the issues that haunted the Broken Men from the primitive times. According to Dr. Ambedkar every individual in primitive society belonged to a tribe. On the other hand tribal organization was being based on common blood and common kinship an individual born in one community cannot join the other as a member. The broken men in this way had to live as stray individuals. In the tribesmen's war such broken men remain vulnerable of being attacked. So also they stay near the village only for their safety and food.

The settled tribes also became vulnerable of being attacked from the still nomadic migratory tribes. It was easy for migratory tribes to attack the village and take away their wealth. The nomadic tribes were attracted towards the village additionally for the corn which they did not have other than cattle. On the other hand the settled tribes were handicap of being engaged in agriculture work that they cannot go on war leaving aside agricultural work. Therefore, once settled community like the broken men was also compelled to solve the problem of safety. According to Dr. Ambedkar these two tribes i.e. settled and the Broken came in an agreement. Such agreement also addressed the question of giving shelter to the Broken Men. Since the Broken Men were not the kin to the settled tribes therefore, they could not get the place inside the village. On the basis of Dr. Ambedkar's theory on the Broken Men, its time

period could be fixed. He mentioned the nomadic tribes who settled down for agriculture and at the same time some nomadic tribe keeps on raiding those settled ones. It is here the Broken Men displaced from the Centre of the village to periphery. According to Historians, Archeologists and Sociologists such pre historic activities occurred in Neolithic period. Romila Thapar observes:

> "Initially the cultivators are likely to have moved from place to place before more intensive agriculture made them sedentary. This may well have been confrontation between hunter gatherers and shifting cultivators, some of the later having only recently been hunter-gatherers themselves, although now wishing to subordinate other activities to agriculture. Ultimately, the dominance of the later was established and the dependence on hunting and gathering would have declined." (Thapar 2002: p 75)

Romila Thapar indicates here the resistance between settled tribes and the still Nomads hunter gatherers occurs in the Neolithic period. Therefore, process of broken men as proposed by Dr. Ambedkar may have occurred in the late Neolithic period. Historically this movement of society occurred much earlier to the Indus Civilization. This is also indicative of stratification of society prior to the Indus civilization. This might be the reason Dr. Ambedkar did not give much emphasis to the assumption based on Indus valley. In yet another book Romila Thapar documents the presence of Untouchable like community lower than shudra was in existence in the reign of King Bimbisara of Magadha who was contemporary to Buddha.

> "A category lower than that of the shudras came to be recognized during this period. These were the untouchables. They may well have been an aboriginal tribe, gradually edged away to the frontiers of areas of Aryan control, where they lived by hunting and food gathering. They are described as having their own language distinct from Aryan speech. Their

> occupation such as rush weaving and hunting came to be looked upon as extremely low." (Thapar 1992: p56)

Romila Thapar's observation on the presence of a group lower than Shudras clears the position of untouchable who were having their separate existence at the periphery of the village. But on the basis of various other evidences, it is not yet clear that untouchability was in practice during that period.

Prior to developing the theory of the Broken Men, Dr. Ambedkar was in search of reason why untouchables were living outside the periphery of the village. He believed the communities living at the periphery were the broken men. He was able to break the ice from the position of untouchable caste Mahars as they lived on the periphery of village. Dr. Ambedkar further gives reference to the Muslim King Bedar who gave 52 rights to Mahars against the Hindu villagers. This was merely confirming that these rights were available from the ancient times. Therefore, he drew his conclusion that:

> "The untouchables lived outside the village from the very beginning. They were not deported and made to live outside the village because they were declared untouchables. They lived outside the village from the beginning because they were broken men who belonged to the tribe different from the one to which the settled tribe belonged." (Moon 1990: p280)

To confirm his assumption he referred to the examples of similar untouchability in Ireland and Wales. This village system vanished from Ireland and Wales in history due to intermarriage between village men and those who lived outsides the village under the rule of ennoblement. According to Mr. Seebhom, "This rule was that if a non-tribesman lived next to the tribe and married within a tribe for a given number of generations he became their kindred." (Moon 1990: p284) Since the ancient times in India such

intermarriages were prevented by the laws of Manu under Manusmriti, untouchability remained in functioning throughout the centuries later. On the condition of untouchables in Indian village Dr. Ambedkar observes:

> "The notion of untouchability supervened and perpetuated difference between kindred and non-kindred, tribesmen and non-tribesmen in another form; namely; between touchables and untouchables. It is this new factor which prevented the amalgamation taking place in the way in which it took place in Ireland and Wales, with the result that the system of separate quarters has become a perpetual and permanent feature of the Indian Village." (Moon 1990: p285)

Dr. Ambedkar suggests here that the touchability and untouchability is the reason why still Dalits live outside the village periphery. In his theory of Caste and its Genesis he has given the theory of Origination of caste which surveys the historical reasons of the development of caste system in India.

Rise of Untouchability

While finding answers to the origin of untouchability, Dr. Ambedkar rejects the racial difference as the origin of untouchability because he found that "if totem, Kul and gotra, have any significance it means that those who have the same totem must have been kindred. If they were kindred they could not be persons of different race." (Moon 1990: p304) At the same time he rejects the theory of occupational origin of untouchability. The filthy and unclean occupations which the untouchables perform are common to all human societies. In every human society there are people who perform these occupations. Why were such people not treated as untouchables in other parts of the World?

Dr. Ambedkar put forward two assumptions for the beginning of untouchability. First, the hostility of Brahmins

towards Buddhism and the other was continuity of beef eating by the broken men even after declaring cow as a sacred animal to Hindus. According to the historians Manusmriti was written after 185 BC. This was the time when last Maurya dynasty descendant Brahadratha was killed by his Brahmin Commander Pushamitra Shunga in 185 BC. Dr. Ambedkar connects the rise of untouchability with the ban of cow killing. Dr. Ambedkar clearly indicates that the untouchability was introduced to the follower of Buddhism especially to those who were already living at the periphery of the village as broken men since the primitive times. It was as a result of creating supremacy of Brahmanism over Buddhism. In the later centuries the Roti-beti tradition was ceased amongst the communities. They became closed class, therefore, untouchability continued in the practice more severely. Introduction of untouchability to the broken men was the double subjugation to them in the history. The first marginalization occurred in the Neolithic period and another occurs under the Gupta Dynasty. The later time may be considered as the beginning of Dalitness.

Rise of Caste System and Dalitness

Indian caste system is unique in its form and structure, developed in water tight compartment and still has its existence the way it was many centuries back. It is a closed class. According to G. S. Ghure, "Castes were groups with a well-developed life of their own, the membership whereof, unlike that of voluntary association and of class, was determined not by selection but by birth." (Ghure 2014: p6) Shridhar Ketkar was the first Indian Sociologist who systematically studied caste and its characteristics. He defined caste as: "a social group having two characteristics (i) membership is confined to those who are born of members and includes all persons so born; (ii) the members are forbidden by all inexorable social law to marry outside the

group. Each one of such groups has a special name, while these larger groups are but subdivision of groups still larger which have independent names." (Ketkar 1909: p15) Analyzing Lothal from the Harappan period, Gregry Possehl commented that:

> "Within the late third and early second millennia B.C. a complex interlocking cultural mosaic was developing in South Asia...which suggests a growth of interdependence between sociocultural groups with fundamentally different system of settlement and subsistence, material culture and presumably diverse cultural tradition. This is a form of cultural integration still found in India...this interlocking relationship is also generally applicable to one of the essential aspects of caste organization if viewed as a total system." (Omvedt 2011: p33)

Commenting upon Gregry Possehl's observation Gail Omvedt found these groups may be primary forms of castes:

> "These various groups may be seen as proto caste, and it may well be that they had the corporate-equalitarian features hypothesized by Klass; once a surplus developed processes of conquest took place and state and cities were established, these groups tribes becoming Jatis, were integrated gradually into a hierarchical order that included relations of exploitation, domination and ideological concepts and practices of purity and pollution." (Omvedt 2011: p33)

For a Marxist thinker, caste is a superstructure of the orthodox five stages i.e. Primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism and socialism. Sharad Patil thought that "the jati-feudal society beginning with the rise of state." (Omvedt 2011: p38)

After reviewing works of contemporary Sociologists, Mr. Senart, Nesfield, Sir H. Risley on caste, Dr. Ambedkar gives altogether different proposition. "Prohibition or rather the absence of intermarriage-endogamy, to be concise- is the only one that can be called the essence of caste when rightly

understood." (Moon 2014: p8) He established his point that the basis of caste is none other than ceasing of intermarriages on the basis of psychological theory in the last part of his research paper Caste in India.

In the paper he gives the analogy of surplus man and surplus woman of the Indian society. He calls widow and widower as the surplus in the society. He found that for maintaining the caste equilibrium equal number of men and women were required. If any one of the man or woman dies, the system would be imbalanced. Indian society had two options for widow in such conditions first; burn her on the funeral pyre of her husband and second enforced widowhood on her for life. But these options seemed not suitable for men as society would lose a supporting hand. Neither was he allowed to marry in other community nor in his own with an eligible bride. Therefore either he was forced to celibacy for life or getting him married to the girl yet to be eligible to marriage. On such a condition of surplus people, Dr. Ambedkar opined that:

> "Though, as I said above, burning the widow and imposing celibacy on the widower are of doubtful service to the group in its endeavour to preserve its endogamy, all of them operate as means. But means, as forces, when liberated or set in motion create an end. What then is the end that these means create? They create and perpetuate endogamy, while caste and endogamy, according to our analysis of the various definitions of caste, are one and the same thing. Thus the existence of these means is identical with caste and caste involves these means." (Moon 2014: pp12-13)

He further developed a theory on the origin of caste, he claimed that creating superiority over other communities Brahmin community developed caste system in the country. "The spread and growth of the Caste system is too gigantic a task to be achieved by the power or cunning of an individual or of a class. Similar in argument is the theory that the

Brahmins created the Caste." (Moon 2014: p16) He put forward his theory on caste on the psychological base as:

> "Endogamy or the closed-door system, was a fashion in the Hindu society, and as it had originated from the Brahmin caste it was whole-heartedly imitated by all the non-Brahmin sub-divisions or classes, who, in their turn, became endogamous castes. It is "the infection of imitation" that caught all these sub-divisions on their onward march of differentiation and has turned them into castes. The propensity to imitate is a deep seated one in the human mind and need not be deemed an inadequate explanation for the formation of the various castes in India." (Moon 2014: p18)

Dr. Ambedkar further gives various conditions for the development of multiple castes and sub-castes as a process. Punishment to one or many was causes for the basis of multiple castes. The caste system was so prevailed throughout the country in such a way that it occupied every corner with its unjust system and degraded the Dalit to cattle level. He was robbed with his fundamental human rights. The condition of Dalit was terribly degraded in the period of Peshwas of Maharashtra. On the other hand these people were denied the gaining of knowledge. According to the Apastamba, the composure of Dharmasutra, "Shudra trying to hear the Vedic texts shall have his ear filled with molten tin of lac; if he recites the Veda his tongue shall be cut off and if he remembers it shall be dismembered". (Ghure 2014: p62) It is a well-known fact that Dr. Ambedkar himself was denied to take Sanskrit as a medium of instruction during his high school education under the same caste based prejudice. The effect of these unjust concepts was under practice until the recent times. The major effect of this unjust social caste system has fallen upon the psyche of the Dalits that they lost their self-respect and self-dignity. Menial work became their rightful duties and they stuck to the lowly work as their duties.

It was Lord Macaulay's educational policies in 1835 afterwards and efforts by social reformers like Mahatma Jotirao Phuley, Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj, Dr. Ambedkar, Periyar Ramasamy, Narayana Guru favourable educational conditions were developed in the last century. Dr. Ambedkar could be taken as the first highly educated of persons of marginalized community representing the first generation of so called untouchables in the country. Taking inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar as a social reformer and similar contemporary icons from the underprivileged communities; education was popularized amongst them for the upliftment of self as well as the whole community. Freedom of speech, space for development and right against socio-economic exploitation conferred upon all the Dalits by The Constitution of India open up the way for socio-economic prosperity and literary expression by them.

Part II

Dalit Literature: Its Origin and Growth

A New Chapter in the Life of Dalits

First educated intellectual generation of late 1950s and early 1960s in Maharashtra who inspired by Dr. Ambedkar's movement of social revolution and mass conversion into Buddhism of 1956, teachers and students started reacting against caste based unjust typical Hindu hierarchy. The literary outcome is symbolic of Dalit's struggle for dignity and self-respect as human beings. Its platform was set by non-Brahmin movement in India since the time of Buddha. Its emergence is deeply rooted in the ancient history of the Indian society. The Dalit literature directly related to the Dalit people and the beginning of the problem of their Dalitness due to socio-cultural discrimination from the ancient times.

Dalit Literature: Connotation and Early responses

Dalit literature is the literature of the Broken men who were marginalized and subjugated under the caste based typical Indian social hierarchy i.e. Varnashrama Dharma. From the late 1950s and early 1960s a distinct stream of Marathi literature sounds protests against caste based exploitation and there was urgent appeal for the drawing attention towards the social marginality of Dalit for ages. The writer were being the intellectual Dalit Students and teachers and activists initially from Siddhartha Mahavidyalaya Mumbai and Milind Mahavidyalaya Aurangabad coincidentally both founded by Dr. Ambedkar. Dalit writers like Shankarrao Kharat and Baburao Bagul published their early work very after the Mass Conversion of Dalits into Buddhism by Dr. Ambedkar in 1956. Also Annabhau Sathe was already settled on the literary horizon upholding the voice of labour and Dalits from the platform of Marxist movement. These writings in 1950s prepared a ground for the oncoming literary writing of subaltern. Since the Dalit literature emerged from the Dr. Ambedkar'sDalit movements, it carries with it its unique social activism. Eleanor Zelliot in her introduction to An Anthology ofDalit Literature maintained: "The Dalit Sahitya (Literature of the Oppressed) movement in Maharashtra seems to be unique-not in the phenomenon of former untouchables writing literature but in the quantity of writing, its variety, its aesthetic considerations, its sense of being a movement, its tie to social action, and in the serious attention it receives as a school within the Marathi literary traditions." (Anand 1992: p.xvii)

Essential Dalit Consciousness, Protests against all kinds of exploitation and negation of values which were responsible for their Dalitness become the nature of the new

literature. Therefore, it brought about turbulence into the socio-political and literary environment of entire Maharashtra. Literary works under various genres like, Poetry, Short Story, Novel, Autobiography, Essays, Critical Essays, etc. were bold and fearlessly taking advantage of right to speech and express given to them by the Constitution of India. The whole genres taking stand of protesters and started attacking the Hindu hegemony of antiquity. Like the theory of imitation proposed by Dr. Ambedkar in his essay Caste in India, Dalit writings were begun in neighboring states in its regional languages. It was from First Akhil Bhartiya Dalit Sahitya Sammelana held in P.W.S. Arts and Commerce College Campus, Indora, Nagpur in 1976; critical genre of Dalit literature was developed. About the same time Dalit intellectuals started interpreting Ambedkarism and Dalit literature. It is a matter of fact that most of the critical insights about various genres exploited by Dalit writers were come from the Presidential Speeches of the later Dalit and Boudha Sahitya Sammelanas (Dalit and Buddhist Literary Symposia). Cognizance of this literary development by Indian academia and western scholars made the Dalit writers develop Criticism which was seen from the early 1970s. According to one of the first generation Dalit poet Waman Nimbalkar, "Dalit literature acquired momentum after 1967. All important things like basic role of Dalit literature, its definitions vis-à-vis its philosophical basis and the conscious process of its creation took place in this period." (Nimbalkar 2006: 39) Since the Dalit literature took departure from traditional literature on the grounds of its unique position of being mouthpiece of exploited, it is important to study its form from the definitions by the noted Marathi mainstream Writers and Dalit Writers.

Early Dalit writings receive both the criticisms. On one hand, it was well received by the mainstream Marathi

readership and get empathetic appreciations. On the other hand, it was rejected as literature on the charges of abusive language and terrible images drawn on the literary canvas. This was the experience received in all regional Dalit writings. Those who appreciate the stand of Dalit writers and their creativity, it is inevitable here to study their observations. According to Tarkatirtha Laxmanshashtri Joshi, "Dalit Literature is that literature which in an artistic manner shows the agony of the Dalits, their painful perplexity, family deterioration, poverty, humiliation, and impoverished condition."(Nimbalkar 2006: p34)

According to Scholar Eleanor Zelliot, "Stress on education, a passionate desire to make their suffering understood and an intense need to contribute to culture has produced a school of literature in Marathi called Dalit Sahitya, the literature of the oppressed." (Zelliot 2010: p259) On the other hand, Dalit writers also came forward with the analysis of the Dalit writings and support its basis.

One of the first generation Dalit writer and critic, Baburao Bagul defines, "Dalit literature as the literature which supports the cause of the human liberty, convinced with the greatness of the human being, opposing severely the superiority of class, race and caste is the Dalit Literature." (Meshram 1998: p60.) Baburao Bagul keeping human values which were the outcome of Dalit movement at the centre assigns a role negation to it. Dr. Gangadhar Pantawne, former Professor of Milind Mahavidyalaya, Aurangabad, a Dalit Intellectual and Thinker defines it as: "Dalit literary movement is a movement of Liberty. It's an effective attempt to discover oneself. Nobody portray 'me' (Dalit) in Marathi literature. A struggle to draw this picture is the Dalit Literature. It's a growl of suppressed self." (Meshram 1998: p62) According to Arjun Dangle; "Dalit literature portrays the hopes and aspirations of the exploited

masses. Their fight for survival, their daily problems, the insults they have to put up with, their experiences and their outlook towards all these events are portrayed in Dalit Literature." (Dangle 1994: p261)

The Theory of Social Influence: Buddhism and Ambedkarism

Dalit communities in different parts of the country come under the influence of Dr. Ambedkar's movement of emancipation. It was socio-cultural and political based movement supported by oppressed people who wanted to free themselves from the clutches of the unjust social system. Highly educated in America and Europe, Dr. Ambedkar became the leader saviour. The Dalit community was following Hinduism which degraded them even lower than cattle. Therefore, Dr. Ambedkar's call for change of faith in 1935 and later embraced it in 1956 for progress, psychological confidence and self-respect, Dalits stand by him. Dalit community under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar transformed into a new but indigenous religion. These oppressed people within a span of few years internalised Buddhism and its practices. This process of change and transformation could be understood on the perspectives of the social influence theory.

According to D. Dolinski "Social influence is the change in individual behaviour, opinion, or emotions resultingfrom what other people do or feel." (Dolinski: 2002) The social influence occurs in a process and is reciprocal in nature. People come under influence of some experts. Lisa Rashotte maintains, "Social influence, however, is the process by which individuals make real changes to their feelings and behaviours as a result of interaction with others who are perceived to be similar, desirable, or expert." (Rashotte: 2016) Harward University Psychologist Herbert Kelman proposed three broad categories of social influence

in his research project submitted to American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in 1956. They are:

a. **Compliance:** According to Kelman compliance occurs when an individual accepts influence because he hopes to achieve a favourable reaction from another person or groups. By accepting such influence, he expects to specific rewards or approval and avoids punishments or disapproval. In compliance people keep their dissenting opinion private.

b. **Identification:** According to Kelman identification process occurs when an individual accepts influence because he wants to establish or maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship to another person or group. Identification occurs when influence comes from some respected person or celebrity.

c. **Internalisation:** Kelman proposed that it occurs when an individual accepts influence because the content of the induced behavior, the ideas and actions of which it is composed-is intrinsically rewarding. Behavior adopted in this way is supposed to be integrated with the individual's existing values. In this process people accept belief or behavior both privately and publically.

Besides Kelman's theory on Social influence, Morton Deutsch and Harold Gerard introduced two possibilities for such influences. First, it is our need to be right and secondly our need to be liked. Bibb Latane developed another social Impact Theory in 1981. According to this theory three factors increases individual's likelihood to respond to social influence. They are: strength, immediacy and Number. Culture plays a vital role in the willingness of an individual to conform to the standard of a group.

Dr. Ambedkar as an individual influences highly on the Dalit masses. Dalits for the welfare and improvement of status found his method right and effective. They wanted to

forge their identity, which they realised was possible with the support to the movement initiated by Dr. Ambedkar. Dalit community's changed behaviour towards the improvement of self and community was the result of his influence upon the masses. With the conversion Buddhism became the way of life to these Dalits which brought psycho social development in their life. It was the process that could be considered as the influence through identification and internalisation as proposed by Herbert Kelman.

Inspiration of Dalit literature

Many incidences, events, places, beautiful animate and inanimate objects inspire writers in general. This is what they perceive from the outer world and through the writings they respond to their feelings and inner thoughts. William Wordsworth in the Second Edition of Preface to Lyrical Ballad (1800) maintains writer writes under one compulsion i.e. giving pleasure to the reader. On the other, for the source of inspiration to poetry he maintains, "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility..." (Ramaswamy 2004: p307)

In the preface Wordsworth talks about abilities of poet to receive divine visions from the nature. In the Tradition and Individual Talent, T.S. Eliot claims that "the historical sense compels, a man to write...this historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as temporal and of timeless and of temporal altogether, is what makes writer traditional." (Ramaswamy 2004: p169) According to American Novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald writing develops out of compulsion to write. "You don't write because you want to say something; you write because you've got to say something." (Fitgerald 2016) Here Fitzgerald generalizes the inspiration to all writers.

The case of inspiration to Dalit literature is altogether different from the aforesaid thoughts. Dalit literary movement is the offshoot of Dalit movement of emancipation initiated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar which is linked with the social reformation movements of Mahatma Jotirao Phule, Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj, Narayana Guru, Periyar Ramasamy, etc. and it begun with Buddha (565 B.C.-483 B.C.). Many Dalit writers don't see difference between Dalit literary movement and social movement by Dalits. The anti-caste and anti-Bhahmanistic movements were the movements for the restoration of human values to the ex-untouchables and backward communities. Therefore, chiefly Dr. Ambedkar and all the reformers and philosophy of emancipation of a marginalized man 'the other' in that tradition becomes inspiration of the present day Dalit literature.

Buddha (563 BC-483 BC)

Dr. Ambedkar's mass conversion of 1956 into the new faith of Buddhism along with his millions of followers in Nagpur was the epoch making event. Ex-Hindu untouchables embraced Buddhism the religion of this native land for regaining their lost self-respect and dignity which was denied in the previous faith. According to Dr. Ambedkar, Buddhism was the chief religion of this country till the invasion by Muslim invaders. It was at its peak in the reign of Emperor Asoka and during Maurya Dynasty. Also he claimed that the broken men were Buddhists (Moon 1990: p315) who were later treated as untouchables.

The historical Buddha, was the crusader against superstition and the unjust social division brought in by Brahmanism. The liberation of man was at the centre of his philosophy. The essential social values of his philosophy were liberty, equality, fraternity, and social justice to all. His philosophy was based on non-permanence (Anicca), non-

soul (Anatta) and no god. On the other hand he preaches "attahi attano natho, kohi natho parosiaya" (one is the controller of himself; there is no other external god to control over him). Buddha made his disciples and followers from all strata of society, men and women. His Sangha was like the Ocean where all castes and social divisions were vanished into one as humanism. All disciples were Buddhist monks at the ground of equality and without previous social identity and hierarchy. They work as the missionary spreading the teachings of Buddha and helping poor, sick, criminals, low caste and needy. Therefore, it became the popular faith of the country. Buddha's teachings appealed to socio-economically low communities at contemporary times because there was no discrimination on the basis of social division. Everybody was treated as equal and due respect was paid. This Dhamma was spread in Asia and other parts of the world with the royal patronage from Emperor Asoka, King Kanishka, etc. This popular religion of the country vanished from the native country under enmity from Hinduism and consequent invasion from the Muslim invaders.

In the light of growing untouchability and religion based discrimination Dalit communities lost their self-respect and dignity till the British India and their state was at degraded level in the times of the Peshwas. Therefore, revival of Buddhism by Dr. Ambedkar in 1956 was important. The revival was considered as the Dhammakranti. The Dalit communities who converted into the new faith of Buddhism in 1956, under the inspiration of Buddha, and Dr. Ambedkar started transforming into educated and cultured community. According to Waman Nimbalkar, "Dalit literature considers Dr. Ambedkar's' Dhammakranti as its inspiration. The roots of new consciousness can be traced in the thoughts of Buddha." (Nimbalkar 2006: p40) Therefore,

Waman Nimbalkar claims that the Dalit literature is none other than the literature of Buddhist Philosophy. The development of Dalit literature was prominently seen after the mass conversion by Dr. Ambedkar.

Dr. Ambedkar as the inspiration to Dalit Literature

Since Dr. Ambedkar began an organized social movement on socio-political and cultural front, all the Dalit writers and litterateurs unanimously believe he is one of the foremost inspiration to Dalit literature. "Dalit literature stands against the background of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's life, revolution and struggle." (Nimbalkar 2006: p39)

Lack of mass education and illiteracy amongst Dalits till the period of independence blocks the creative literary responses from them. Dalit movement in the country by Dr. Ambedkar created all pervasive effect on the socio-political and cultural life of people. The Dalits who were pushed away from the education, started becoming literate and understood the importance of self-respect and dignity of the self. Therefore, Dr. Yashwant Manohar considers him as the favorite protagonist of Dalit Literature. Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy comes out of his life, work, and mission based on Buddhism. Therefore, Dalit literature receives impetus from that base and writers agree to have following that philosophical tradition.

The social-political and cultural movement initiated by Dr. Ambedkar provided a strong background for the Dalits' cause. The entire period of that movement therefore was responsible to develop artistic creation by Dalits especially literary writings supporting the movement. On the creative inspiration of Dalit literature, noted Dalit writer Sharankumar Limbale gives the period of Dalit movements lead by Dr. Ambedkar: "the period dating from the

Southborough Commission of 27 January 1919 to 6 December 1956, constitutes the backbone of Dalit literature. This period was influenced by the work and accomplishments of Babasaheb Ambedkar." (Limbale 2004: pp45-46) Unanimously all the Dalit writers believe that the period of Dr. Ambedkar's movement is the real inspiration to their writings.

Creative literary platform was prepared through the periodicals and thought provoking research material by Dr. Ambedkar. Taking inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar, Dalits aspire their children to educate like him and upgrade themselves. These learned young men entered higher education and got exposure to the world literature. Many Dalit writers are highly educated and employed at higher jobs. These writers realized the effect of writings through the example of Dr. Ambedkar himself and from other revolutionary literature like Marxist literature, Classic literature by Leo Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky, etc., and Black literature (Afro-American).

Why Dr. Ambedkar emerges as theFather of Dalit Literature?

Dr. Ambedkar created a massive literature including his Marathi Periodicals Muknayak, Bahishkrut Bharat, Samata and Janata (Prabuddha Bharat); Research based books on Economics, Sociology, History, Anthropology, Politics, Religious Philosophies, and Buddhism, etc. His periodicals not only became the mouthpiece of Dalits' cause but it provided a platform to the writers in the contemporary times. His Periodicals, Janata and Prabuddha Bharat were real experiments by him to educate his readers, especially Dalits for the development of tomorrow's creative literature.

The connection of Dr. Ambedkar's Periodicals with the development of Dalit literature could be compared with the

English periodicals Spectators and Tattlers by Richard Steele and Joseph Addison between 1709 and 1714 which were responsible as one of the reasons for the rise of the English novel. The essays in these periodicals focused on reformation of the mannerisms and morals of the middle class of England. At the same time it highlighted the political and economic scenario of the country.

Unlike English readership in London, literate readers of Dr. Ambedkar's Periodicals were very few. The initial two periodicals Mukanayak and Bahishkrut Bharat were completely devoted to the social cause. He started experimenting with his periodicals Samata (1928) and Janata (1930) which was renamed as the Prabuddha Bharat in 1956. In these two periodicals, in almost every issue, a lyrical poem by some Shahirs and poets was published. Sadashiv Narayne, Hanumant Varale, Narayan Mohite, Chintaman Salve, Noted Poet Bhimrao Kardak who later popularizes Ambedkari Jalase, Shekhar, S. G. Bhamgare, Changdeo Mohite, Tukaram Purohit, Mukundagraj, K.A. Dhengade, Yashwant Rudanekar and many more poets published their lyrical poems through these periodicals. Dalit poets did not get other platform for their literary expression than these two. Some of the poems were written in the praise of Dr. Ambedkar as their Savior and Hero. The poems and songs in Janata were often based on the movements initiated by Dr. Ambedkar, reveals their agonies of being untouchables, and some poems expresses boldly the rejection of caste based institution. The later Dalit poetry i.e. in 1960s was identified with the Dalit consciousness and its nature of rejection could be traced from some of the songs published in Janata. One such song by K.A. Dhengade published in Janata on 3 February 1914 could be taken as the representative Pre-Dalit Poetry:

Freedom loving youth, give up your laziness, from now on

Breaking the noose of slavery, toil day and night,
The torch of noble self-respect has lit up the battlefield
Become proud heroes, manly lords, with scimitar in hand
(Omvedt 2011: p190-191)

This representative pre-Dalit poetry carries all that elements which makes poetry as Dalit poetry. The song reflects the Dalit consciousness, rejection to the Hindu hegemony which enslave Dalits, militancy, cry and struggle for freedom, faith in Ambedkarism and freedom, equality and brotherhood as the values of humanism.

On way to London for the Round Table Conference via sea route through Suez Canal, Dr. Ambedkar sent letters to Press which were published from 14 September 1931 to 12 October 1931in a series entitled on the Way to Europe. These letters were his meditation upon the social movement by Dalits in India and their stand for the separate electorate in the Round Table Conference. At the same time he exquisitely wrote his experiences of the journey by ship and the beautiful description of Suez Canal by him could be taken as the Travelogues.

A Story entitled Effects of Inequality by Bhashkar Raghunath Kadrekar was published in Janata in two episodes on 6 and 13 August 1932. Also in the same periodical a series of Maxim Gorky's famous Novel the Mother started from 20 August 1932 and a book Karl Marx's Labour, Work and Capital by D. V. Pradhan started from 30 April 1932. Brief bio-sketches of Karl Marx and Frederic Angels were also published on 23 July 1932. Giving place to the local poets in the Janata and published Gorky's Mother and Marx's thoughts, obviously, Dr. Ambedkar intended to orient his people with the creative literary world. Janata also speaks the story of Dr. Ambedkar's efforts in preparing a wholesome ground for the creative literature by his people.

Campaigner of Education and new culture

Dr. Ambedkar realized that the development of backward communities was possible through education only. From first half of the 19th century especially1835 onwards British policies on education were favorable to these under-privileged communities, but there were not much schools and colleges for children of these communities. Mahatma Jotirao Phuley prepared a ground for the education of the backward communities by opening two schools for girls and untouchables in 1848. "Giving emphasis to the mass education of Dalits and new cultural development in the light of socio-political awakening, Dr. Ambedkar founded Bahishkrut Hitkarani Sabha on 20 July 1924. With the birth of the Bahiskrut Hitkarani Sabha, dawned the age of self-respect." (Keer 2009: p 62) The founding principles of the sabha were 'Educate, Agitate and Organise'. Also first two objectives of the sanstha indicate Dr. Ambedkar's' vision for the cultural development of the community. Accordingly the sabha started a hostel for high school students belonging to depressed classes at Solapur (M.S.) on 4 January 1925. To develop interest amongst Dalit communities towards knowledge and social work, the sabha had started an institution which runs a magazine "Sarasvati Vilas", a Library and 'Mahar Hockey Club' in Mumbai.

On grants of education in the Bombay Legislature Assembly on 12 March 1927, Dr. Ambedkar advocated for the special provisions like scholarships to the depressed classes students. In the light of less numbers of government primary and high-schools and hostels for depressed classes' students he founded Depressed Classes Education Society in 1928. On request of Dr. Ambedkar to the Government, the society was granted Rs. 9000 annually. The sanstha started five hostels for students. Dr. Ambedkar himself reached the

donors for the cause of education of backward community through that sanstha.

Dr. Ambedkar wanted highly intellectual Dalits to join him in the socio-political and cultural awakening movement. Zelliot observes: "He exhorted numerous conferences of untouchables to expand their educational opportunities at every level; much of his own efforts was aimed at producing highly educated men, capable of raising the image of the untouchables through their ability to function at the highest level of Indian urban society." (Zelliot 2010: p159) Therefore, on 8 July 1945 he established People's Education Society for higher education and educational facilities to the Dalit students. On the basis of aims and objectives of the society, Siddhartha Night School, Bombay (1947), Milind High School Aurangabad (1955) Sidharth college of Arts, Commerce and Science (1946), Milind college of Arts and Sciences (1950) and Sant Gadge Maharaj Chokhamela Hostel, Pandharpur (1949) were established. After the demise of Dr. Ambedkar, Peoples Education Society established many Schools, hostels and colleges in Maharashtra and in adjacent states. The early Creative literary development from students and teachers of backward communities was seen in The Siddhartha College Bombay and Milind Mahavidyalaya Aurangabad especially after the implementation of the Constitution of India. The freedom of speech and expression as the fundamental right certainly brought revolution amongst the Dalit intellectuals. The Dalit literary development was fostered by the magazine, Asmitadarsh with contributions from the teachers and Students of Milind Mahavidyalaya in the early 1960s. These two higher educational institutes were personally monitored by Dr. Ambedkar when they were taking its shape in the initial years. Therefore, Dalit literary development owes to Dr. Ambedkar as the father.

Another Influences on Dalit literature: (Mahatma Jotiba Phule (1826-1890), Savitibai Phule (1831-1897) and Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj (1874-1922)

In modern India social awakening in real sense for underprivileged began with Mahatma Phule. With the favorable British Educational policies as mass education in India in 1835 and 1854, during the second half of 19th century, Mahatma Phule rose as a lone champion of Dalits and farmers and laid foundation to anti-caste movement. In Poona he found there were no schools for girls and Dalits, so he taught his wife Savitibai to read and write. Savitribai became the first woman teacher of the country started by this couple in 1848. In the same year they started another school for the Dalit students. Mahatma Phule advocated widow remarriages and he opened front against the sati tradition. He established Satya Shodhak Samaj in 1873 and spread Satya Shodhak philosophy. He is known for his phenomenal works *'Brahmanache Kasab' ('Priest Craft Exposed'* (1869), *'Gulamgiri' 'Slavery'* (1873), '*Shetkaryancha Asud' Cultivator ship cord* (1883), 'Satsar' *The Essence of Truth* (1885), *Sarvajanik Satya Dharma* 1991 and a play *Trutiya Ratna.*

On Social awakening works by Phule, Dr. Ambedkar considers him as his Guru (Teacher) after Buddha. The social reformation movement reached its maturity with Dr. Ambedkar which was initiated by Phule and Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur. Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj was known for his reservation policies (1902) and special provisions for the scholarships, facilities for higher education and employment to Dalits in his state. He restricted child marriages, encouraged widow remarriages and inter-caste marriage in his tenure. He provided patronage to Mahatma Phule's Satya Shodhak Samaj.

Besides Maharashtra Social awakening movement was initiated in other States of the country by influential Dalit leaders. Their contribution in fostering Dalit movement was equally important. E.V. Ramasamy Naykkar (1879-1973) was known for his anti-Brahmin stand, self-respect movement and his Political Party Dravidar Kazgam in Tamil, Iyothee Thass (1845–1914) was a Paraiyar and anti-caste activist a pioneer of the Dravidian Movement. He was converted to Buddhism believing it was the original religion of Paraiyar. Narayana Guru (1856 –1928) was a social reformer from Dalit community in Kerala. Birsa Munda (1875–1900) was an Indian tribal freedom fighter and folk hero from Bihar. Dalit movement acknowledges the contribution of these leaders. Therefore, influence of these icons on Dalit writings could not be denied.

Debates on Karl Marx

From the 1970s Karl Marx and Indian Communism becomes the subject of debate in Dalit literary circles of writers and critics. Whether Marx is one of the sources of inspiration to Dalit literature? Or whether Dalit literature is influenced of Marx and Communism? The debates and discussion on the topic were inevitable especially during the Dalit Panthers' active period. Charges were leveled against some prominent Dalit writers of being pro-Marxist. In fact the Dalit panther was temporarily split on the issue of Marxism.

The subject naturally provoked the comparison between the Ambedkarism and Marxism whereas Dr. Ambedkar himself compares Marx with Buddha. On number of occasions he revealed that he studied Marxism with keen interest as he was the professor of Economics. From the beginning he was critical to Marxism. In his Lecture on 'Buddha or Karl Marx' delivered in Nepal on 20 November 1956, Dr. Ambedkar concentrated on the relevance of

effectiveness of thoughts in the context of Indian caste system. He compares the foundation of Marxism and Buddhism initially. According to Dr. Ambedkar the foundation of these two thought process had no difference. But these two differ in case of treatment and methods to overcome from the poverty. Marx provides 'removing private property' as the remedy to poverty whereas Buddha proposes to sangha that "no monk shall have private property." (Narake 2003: p553)

According to Dr. Ambedkar, Sangha has a long history; it was called as Parivrajaka, means a displaced person. He believes that they were broken men displaced during the tribal conflicts amongst the Aryans. Buddha gave them rules of life. The Bhikshu is not allowed to have property. Therefore, when communism denies the private property, Buddhism had more severe rules regarding the same. He found Buddha's method more effective which was based on the changing of the mind of man rather than force.

Dr. Ambedkar in the next part shifted his attention on the means of state governance as a result of these thought processes. About Communism he observes, "They establish by means of violence what they call the dictatorship of the proletariat. They deprive all people who have property, of their political rights. They cannot have representation in the legislature. They cannot have right to vote, they must remain what they call second grade subjects of the state, the ruled, not sharing authority or power." (Narake 2003: pp554-555) Therefore, for Dr. Ambedkar Communism was based on force and dictatorship. Dr. Ambedkar questions the very "'force' when force disappears; there is no use of perusing it. Because if the mind is not converted force will always be necessary." (Narake 2003: p555) Finally, Dr. Ambedkar answers the communism based on dictatorship of proletariat with the Buddha's Democracy on the line of republican

Vajjis of the contemporary times. He found the Buddha's method safest and soundest.

On the other hand, Dalit writers, critics, and intellectuals compare Marxism with Ambedkarism. Imitating Dr. Ambedkar, Dalit writers also tested Marxism on its applicability in the Indian caste system. Waman Nimbalkar rejected the applicability of Marxism in Indian context, on the other; he found Dr. Ambedkar's movement was total as it gave full attention to Indian society on the grounds of social, economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.

Answering the insistence from the progressivists in Hindi of evaluating Dalit literature on Marxist criticism, Omprakash Valmiki put forward his stand on Indian Marxism. Ompraksh Valmiki in his interview by the present researcher claimed that Marx's influence is natural. In fact Marx's thought is the greatest thought given to the world, it also started change in the world...the world is influenced by Marx's thoughts, but the basis of Dalit literature is obviously the thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar. (Valmiki 2007: p147) Valmiki found Dr. Ambedkar's thought was the Philosophy of human sensibilities, establishment of society based on equality and basis for Liberty from the caste system. Taking inspiration from this very thought Dalits want to search their identity.

Indian Marxist like Marxists in the other nations gave emphasis to the rights of labour and peasants. They ignore the caste based economical discrimination here to the class basis in general. Therefore, focusing on the effective movement initiated by Dr. Ambedkar for the annihilation of caste, Sharankumar Limbale observes that:

> "Babasaheb Ambedkar's life and work were dedicated to the well-being of those whom society had boycotted. He thought about religion, economy, literature, politics, society, law, and

> freedom in terms of the interest of the untouchables. He did not ignore these interests in his consideration of Marxism. While he held that there was neither caste discrimination nor untouchability in communism, he considered Indian Marxism to be incomplete because it did not think about ending caste. The destruction of untouchability was for him the paramount concern." (Limbale 2004: pp 62-63)

Limbale elaborately discusses Ambedkarism and Marxism, pro-Marxist and anti-Marxist Dalit writer's stand in his book Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature. For some Dalit writers, Dalit issues are not only social but economic too. Therefore, according to them, for annihilating such unjust social system, there needs to be a meeting of Ambedkar's anti Caste thought and Marx's anti Class thought. But there is a strong resistance from a large group of Dalit writers to this point of view in the light of complete potentialities lies in Ambedkarism itself. In case of Dalit literary criticism Sharankumar Limbale did not reject the influence of other progressive ideas.

On one hand, Prominent Dalit writers who participate in the debate on Marxism and Ambedkarism found the Dalit movement of emancipation was initiated by Dr. Ambedkar and before closing of his eyes he succeeded in restoring the socio-economic, political and cultural rights of Dalits in the country through the democratic political system and the Constitution. Therefore, for Dalit writers he is the soul inspiration to Dalits writings. When they come to Marx, they found Ambedkarism is overshadowed on Marxism in case of Dalit movements. On the other hand, Dalit writers give no space to think if the Marxism was the influential factor on Dalit literature. It is no denying the fact that prominent first generation Dalit writer Annabhau Sathe involved in the labour movement based on Marxist thoughts throughout his life. Many Dalit critics agreed that his writings show the Marxist influence. Thinking on the other possibility in this

regard, in his book Towards the Aesthetic of Dalit Literature, Sharankumar Limbale elaborately discusses on the debate. According to him, Bhausaheb Adsul, Vijay Sonwane and Raja Dhale alleged that Dalit writers like Baburao Bagul, Namdeo Dhasal and Daya Pawar were Communists. Also for him writers like Arjun Dagle, Daya Pawar and Yashwant Manohar advocated a Marxist position on Dalit writers. Such allegations may be unjust, but Ompraksh Valmiki also agreed as Marx's influence was natural though he too thought Dr. Ambedkar is the soul inspiration to Dalit literature.

References of early literary responses by Dalits in Buddha period

The broken communities and few people who were engaged in menial works were considered as low status people. These communities were living away from the villages near the pond, river and canals. Though untouchability was not prevailed at the time; few communities like Dom, Chandala, Khattiya (a family of enunciate man and a lay woman, members of such family were treated as low like untouchables) and Bhangis were living life as untouchables. The consciousness of high and low was certainly in practice in those days therefore, people from underprivileged communities suffer disrespect and lost right to live as human being. Buddha was a great crusader against ill traditions, superstitions and social discrimination. He ordained men and women from all strata of society and established Sangha on the principle of liberty, equality, fraternity and equal opportunity to all.

Some of those who ordained as Buddhist monks were previously from the low status communities may be antyajas. These men lived life with the consciousness of being outcaste earlier. They wanted to liberate from these social limits and discrimination. They could not fight alone against

structured social system of hierarchy. They found Buddha's teachings and way of life was surely liberating them and earned them respect in the society. Therefore, they joined Sangha as monk to fight against the unjust social order with the help of Buddha's teachings.

Thergatha and *Therigathas* are the poems of self-narratives by 'Thera' senior monks (Bhikkhu) and 'Theri' senior Nuns (Bhikkhunis) of Sangha. The literary tradition of Sangha was rich with original teachings of Buddha and the creative contribution by contemporary senior monks and nuns under oral tradition. Some of the Thera and Theris were from the low status communities; they carried with them that consciousness. Dasak Thera and Channa Thera were sons of slave, Suppiya and Sopaka were from untouchable Doma community, Sumangal, Jambuka and Kappat Thera were poor beggar, Dhaniya Thera was from a Potters' family, Yasoj Thera was from Fisherman's community, Sabhiya and Sabbakami Thera were born from Khattiya mothers, another Sopaka Thera belonged to a Chandala community, and Sunit Thera was from a scavenger's family. In case of Theris, Vimala Theri was born from a courtesan, Punna was daughter of a servant (slave) of Anathapindika and Ambapali Theri was a courtesan.

Through self-narratives they express their pains in the form of poems about the previous life and how they overcome their sufferings by becoming disciple of the Buddha. These poems are self-evident of negation to the unjust tradition and Dalit consciousness.

In a lowly family I was born,
Poor, with next to no food,
My work was degrading:
I gathered the spoiled,
The withered flowers from shrines (Bhikkhu 1994)

The self-narration of Sunit, the Scavenger revealed his story of being to becoming. In the previous life he was hated by others for he belonged to scavenger community. But when he became the disciple of Buddha, he regained self-respect and dignity. Even the deities pay homage to him. He was raised up to the status of Brahmana, means the noble one in Buddhism.

Theri Punna was born as a servant in the house of Buddha's Devotee Anathpindika. Being a lay person following Buddha's teachings she attained sotapnaa stage. When she converted a Brahmana into Buddha's faith, Anathapindika released her from bondage. She got enlightenment. The poem not only narrates the Punna's convincing power with the wisdom but it also unveils the stand of rationalism of Buddhism versus superstitions led by Brahmins of the time. The poem also could be taken as rejection to the illogical traditions of the time.

There are a number of Buddhist canonical texts which attack on the Brahmanism in the following centuries. Ashvaghosha's Vajrasuci is one of the representative book which opens bold attack on the Varna-shram dharma i.e. Varna based social hierarchy.

Literary responses from Dalit saints of Medieval Period

Decline of Buddhism from India brought decline in the creative writings in Pali-Prakrit and Sanskrit 7-8 century onwards. Then there was another development seen in the other regional languages. In the ancient period of 7th century, Siddha Sarhapa who was a Buddhist monk known as the founder of Vajrayana practiced in Tibet, started writing in Apabramsa (old Hindi) form influenced by Sanskrit. He develops new stanza form of poetry i.e. Doha and Pada. Many Hindi Medieval Sants composed their poetry in Doha and in Pada. Later Medieval Sant Kabira

popularized Doha and Sant Meera popularized Pada. Marathi Sants Abhangas and Ovis were quite influenced by these forms. Siddha Sarahapa was quite a revolutionary writer. He attacked on the Brahmani social order.

"Brahmanehi ma janatt hi Bheu
Evahi padhiehu e chaubeu
Michhehi jag, bahiu Bhulle." (Upaddhyaya 2004: p43)

In this Pada, Sarhapa attacks on the futility of Hindu rituals. Sarhapa's dohakosh contains poetry based on the spiritual development. Sarhapa's criticism on the social discrimination came from Buddhism as rationalism versus superstitions. The poetry form founded by Sarhapa became popular medium of poetry by Sant (Bhakti) tradition during the medieval period.

Bhakti tradition in Maharashtra is believed to have originated with Sant Dyaneshwar. Sant Chokhoba or Chokhamela was his contemporary. He was born to Mahar parents Sudam Yeskar and Savitribai. He was married to Soyrabai who also earned her name in poetry of Sant tradition. Their son Karmamela was also known for Abhangas in Marathi. Chokhamela was the devotee of Vithal of Pandharpur. But during his bhakti of his god he suffers discrimination for he was a Mahar. A protest could trace in his abhangas. He sings a song of protest against his birth in a lower untouchable caste,

"If you had to give me this birth
Why give me birth at all?
You cast me away to be born; you were cruel
Where were you at the time of my birth?
Who did you help then?
Chokha says: o Lord, O Keshava, don't let me go." (Zelliot 2010: p5)

Being an untouchable Mahar, Chokhamela suffers atrocities and false allegation of stealing the gold chain when

he enters the Vithal's temple along with other Warkaris. He was beaten up there. Chokhamela's poetry though shows the anguish of casteism but yet he seem submissive to the religious base system. Also it was customary to Mahars to receive food in those days for being Bhakt of Vithoba. Chokhamela realized the caste based discrimination is unjust and it was suppressing his brethren therefore, his poetry crooning the sound of rebel is felt.

Kabirdas (1398-1494), was a great saint in the Bhakti tradition. He was brought up by Julaha Muslim family converted from Kori, an untouchable Hindu caste in U.P. He was believed to have belonged to the low caste Kori. Through his protest against Brahmanism, he preached the way of social equality, liberty and fraternity and spiritual development of human beings. The essence of his philosophy lies in these human values. He received a large number of followers during his lifetime and even later. Followers of his philosophy are known as Kabir Panthi (sect). Many lower communities become his followers in North and Central India. Dr. Ambedkar was highly influenced by Kabir's teachings. Therefore, Dr. Ambedkar considered him as his Guru like other two, the Buddha and Mahatma Phule, because he believed, "Kabir could believe the real secret of the philosophy of Buddha."(Kshirsagar 2008: p187)

Kabir advocated equality amongst all communities. He was against untouchability therefore; he raised a question against the practice of untouchability.

> "Jal me Chut hai, thal me chut hai aur graham ke avsar par
> Kirano me bhi chut hai, janma me bhi chut hai aur marne me bhi chut hai
> Kah to re pandit kon pavitra hai?

(He asked a question to the pandit, that who is a holy man? How can one be holy and other profane? What is the way out nobody knows." (Kshirsagar 2008: p187)

Kabir believed in rationalism therefore, he was connected with Buddha when he said, "Tu kahata kagad ki lekhi, mai kahata akhan Dekhi. (He discards that truth if it is not comparable to experimental truth.)" (Kshirsagar 2008: p188)

Another Medieval Saint Ravidas (1433-1534) took up a work of social equality and fraternity. Like Kabir das he was also against any religion based on discrimination. According to him men cannot be divided on the basis of caste, Brahman Khati, bais, Sud, Sabhan ki ek Jat. (He did not think Brahman to be superior to others). (Kshirsagar 2008: p188)). Sant Ravidas rejected the caste which degrade me, "Jat jat me jat hai, jyo keran ke pat, raidas na manus jod sake, jou lo jat na jat. (He disapproves caste system which failed to unite men by a common bond of humanity. Caste is always plural. There are castes amongst caste like leaves on banana trunk.)" (Kshirsagar, 2008, p190) Saint Ravidas taught the moral conduct and purity in life. He was supporter of non-violence and service to men. One of the contemporary Sant Meera (1498-1573) was his disciple who earned her name in the tradition of Bhakti.

Saint tradition in North and Central India brought an expression of Dalits in the form of religion. Guru Granth Sahib of Medieval period compiled by the Fifth Guru of Sikh, Guru Arjundev gave place to those saints who revolted against religious hypocrisy and social division. The sacred book included Kabir and Ravidas from North India and sant Namdeo of Maharashtra. Prof. Chamanlal observes, "Bhakti movement of medieval period was a kind of revolt against social exploitation in many forms in entire India which was in the form of spiritual basis." (Chamanlal 2008: p12)

According to Prof. Chamanlal, roots of Dalit literature especially in the context of Hindi could be traced in the literature of Kabir and Ravidas. On the contrary, Waman Nimbalkar blamed that the saint's literature was supportive to the Caste system which was supported by religion. "A Dalit saint like Chokhamela too wrote Abhangas, along with Gyaneshwar, Tukaram, Ramdas, Namdeo and Eknath, fostering inequality and glorifying god." (Nimbalkar 2006: p21) Sounding similar Limbale observes, "Though in theory the Dalit saints were equal at the doors of the gods, in practice, they were confined to the age-old lowest rung of the ladder. The helplessness of Dalit saints writers signified by this situation, infuriated today's Dalit writers. Because of the caste system, Dalit writers have broken away from Hindu culture. It is therefore, natural that they should feel a distance from the saints." (Limbale 2004: p26) Hindi Dalit writer Omprakash Valmiki also found no Dalit consciousness amongst medieval Dalit saints.

Saints left indelible effect on the social history of medieval India. It's no denying the fact that the medieval Dalit saints resisted against the unequal social conditions but they did not revolted against it. The work of social awakening done by them was within the religious limits by accepting the authority of God and social order. Therefore, though non Dalit critics found connection of Dalit literature with saint literature, present day Dalit writers found no connection of Dalit literature to the saint literature.

A brief Survey of different genres of Dalit literature up to the present

Dalit literature is evolved from the socio-political and Cultural Revolution led by Dr. Ambedkar. Denied education, Dalit communities were away from literacy for centuries so also from literature. From the 1920s onward, education spread like a wildfire amongst the Dalits especially

taking inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar and contemporary Dalit leaders. These communities were familiar with the folk literature, literature of medieval saints and religious literature. Also contemporary drama, Tamasha, Powadas (Ballads), Jalasa (which later in Dalit community was popularized as Ambedkari Jalasa by Bhimrao Kardak around 1938), and traditional songs were popular amongst these people. Traditional singers who were working with Dr. Ambedkar in the labour movement and social movement regularly contributed with the poems and songs in Janata (The People). These songs were inspiring to the masses and awakening the exploited against the exploiters.

The writers of these songs were called as Shahir (Singer) or Kavi (Poets). Janata transformed the Dalit songs into proper poetry till 1950s. Some other Dalit writers and poets who were involved in the Dalit movement independently; occasionally published their poems and anthologies. Shivram Janaba Kamble one of the early Dalit leaders, Kisan Fagoji Bansod, Hira Bansod, Kerubua Gaikwad, Patitpawan, Dinbandu Shegaonkar, were such awakened leaders. The writings of these writers appeared from 1900 to 1940s.

According to Yogendra Meshram, till the 1960s the nature of Dalit literature could be traced. Its features could be realized. Social awareness, social awakening, and social change through the consciousness are some of its elements. Dalit literature was taking shape from the path trod by these writers. But the poetry by them not yet reached the consciousness for which the present Dalit poetry is known.

During post-independence era with the democratic environment Dalit short stories, novels and poems already established distinct from the mainstream Marathi literature by writers Annabhau Sathe, Bandhumadhav, Shankarrao Kharat, and N. R. Shende. “The writing took place during

this phase propagated the message of revolution. This period of Babasaheb's work should be called renaissance phase in the history of Dalit movement."(Limbale 2004: p 24) Dr. Ambedkar's two higher educational institutes one at Mumbai and another in Aurangabad brought revolution favoring literary development amongst Dalit educated young men. But even after independence educated youth were trapped in yet another trouble of being Buddhist and Ambedkarite. But the anger took shape of creative medium. Annabhau Sathe who spent entire life in the communist movement, during last phase of life upheld the faith in Dr. Ambedkar's movement.

The era of Dalit poetry of social awareness and consciousness begins with the beginning of 60s. Dalit writers found forging their identity and reflecting the image of their community boldly. The life in villages and life in cities (Metros like Bombay) for Dalit brought two different worlds of harsh realities, atrocities and discriminations. One of it expresses the deeply anguished mind of poet due to untouchability, poverty, and terrible atrocities and the other describes the dirty localities and slums, prostitutes and their hang outs, labourers in mills, workers in ports and the poverty, industry, horrible life style of these people, and utter/s a language of protest against all these things and raises his/her voice against it. These two streams clearly reveal that the problems of Dalit's life in Mumbai are very different from Dalit's living in villages. Dr. Gangadhar Pantavne's Asmitadarsh which was established in December 1967 provided a strong platform for the cultural and literary expressions from the Dalit writers. Since the foundation of Asmitadarsh, it has been working as a literary movement till date. During 1960 and 1970s all the important genres were established and popularized in Maharashtra including first autobiographies *'Baluta'* of Daya pawar and Athawaninche

Pakshi by P. E. Sonkamble. During seventies and early eighties Dalit literature started appearing in the other regional languages, prominently in Hindi. Dalit literature in the country has been developing for more than six decades and still passing through the developmental phase.

Dalit poetry of New Age

Dalit literature found its release from the songs and poetry. From the early phase Dalit poetry was certainly different from the Marathi poems in case of subject matter, manner, tone and language. It has been said that intense emotions, utmost sensitivity can properly be expressed only through poetry. Dalit poetry in Marathi is at its peak of maturity. It began with first generation Dalit poets Narayan Surve's three anthologies, which are, Aisa ga mi brahma (1962), Majhe Vidyapith (1966), and Jahirnama (1975). Then came Keshav Meshram's Utkhanan (1977), Waman Nimbalkar's Gav Kusabaheril Kavita (1973), Namdev Dhasal's Golpitha (1971), Daya Pawar's Kondwada (1974), Yashwant Manohar's Utthangumpha (1977), Tryambak Sapkale's Surung, Pralhad Chendvankar's Audit (1975), Arjun Dangle's Chhavani Halte Aahe (1977), Naresh Ingle's Angara, Chokha Kamble's Pimpal Pan, Raja Dhale's Prabuddha Bharatatun, Waman Ingle's Surya Saptak (1973) F. M. Shinde's Julus (1972) and Aadim (1975), etc. in quick succession one after another.

Dalit poetry depicts the harsh realities of Dalit life through the sensitive images from the Dalit ghettos. Therefore, it attacks social system caused for the Dalits slavery. Its anger comes naturally as the reaction from Dalit who is troubled with the life threat and robbed with self-respect. Taunt and bitterness both used through sarcastic style in poetry. Namdeo Dhasal uses this device in few of his poems. But during last two decades Dalit literature shows significant change in its style and tone. Some writers

especially in Dalit poetry brought a welcome change. When writers entered into a new phase of its genre clearly indicating that writers are thinking on different perspectives and their experiments with words, style and tone brought new meanings. Contemporary writers like Loknath Yashwant, Prakash Kharat, late Ketan Pimpalapure, Mahendra Gaikwad, Mahendra Bhaware, suresh Wardhe are experimenting with the new Marathi Dalit poetry of 21st century.

Hindi Dalit poetry first appeared in the later part of eighties. Omprakash Valmiki's Sadiyon Ka Santap, Karmshal Bharti's Dalit Manjari, Dharamvir's Hiraman, Mansaram Vidrohi's Dalit Pachasa, Ramdas Nimesha's Bhim Kathamritam, Laxminarayan Sudhakar's Bhimsagar, Shyamsingh 'Shashi's' Eklavya aur anya Kavitayen, Shauraj Singh Bechain's Nai Fasal,Sukhavir sing's Bayan Bahar, Sohanpal Sumanakshar's Shindhughati Bol Uthi, Mohanda's Neimishray's Safadar Ka Bayan, Manoj Sonkar's Shoshitnama, Ramshiromani Horil's Karil Ke Kaante and Jiwan Pag, Prem Shankar's Nai Gandh,. Dayanand Batohi's Yatana Ki Aankhe, Purushottam Satyapremi's Sawalo Ke Suraj, Chandrakumar Warathe's Adhuri Chitthi Roshaniki, Lalchand Rahi's Muk Nahi Meri Kavitayen, Jay Prakash Navendu's Kavitayen (1991), Harikishan Santoshi's Kamalani, N. Singh's Satah Se Uthate Huyen etc. are writing Dalit poetry prominently.

Beside Marathi and Hindi, Dalit poetry is appearing in other languages as well. Madan Veera in Punjabi, Balkrishna Anand, Dalpat Chauhan, Nirav Patel and Jayant Parmar in Gujarati, Pt. K.P. Karuppan, Kallad Shashi, A. Ayappan, K.K.S. Das, K. Than-Kappan, G. Shashi, Raghavan Attole, A. Achutan, and Sanni Kakkikad in Malyalam, in Kannada, Chennanna Valikar's, Siddha Lingay, Vargur Ranchandrappa, Gangadhar Mudliyar,

Govindayya, Indudhar Honnapur, Saraju Katkar, Bal Raju, Ranjan Darga and Tejasvi Kattimoni etc. are writing Dalit poetry.

In Gujarati Harish Mangalam, Pathik Parmar, Purushottam Jadhav, Kisan Sosa, Madhukant Kalpit, Raju Solanki, Sahil Parmar, Shyam Sadhu etc. have contributed to Dalit poetry.

In Tamil, Pratibha Jayachandran, Mathivanna, N. D. Rajkumar (Panirendu Kavithaigl), Ravikumar, Bama, Ilaiyaraja and Devadavan are prominent Dalit poets. In Malayalam, Poikayil appachan, K.K. Govindan, Koviyoore Murali, K.K.S. Das, Raghavan Atholi, Sunny Kovikkad, G. Sashi Madhuravelli, S. Joseph, Sivadas Puramer M.R. renukumar, M.B. ManojVijila,S. Kailash and Binu M. Pallipad are prominent Dalit poets.

Dalit short Stories

Dalit short story is a popular genre in almost all languages. Dalit short stories gave actual representation of life. Its subtle and truthful revelation of facts of atrocities against Dalits, pain and sufferings and scenes of hunger all reflect the world of reality. Readers are shocked by all these confessions and revelations and question its authenticity. But what is truth is truth, whether it is palatable or not. Dalit have experienced painful life of ignominy. Therein lies the authenticity of this literature.

Dalit short story writing in Marathi began with Annabhau Sathe in 1950s. His first anthology of short stories was Khulanwadi (1957). Barbadya Kanjari, Aabi, Laadi, Farari, Bhanamati, and Gajaad followed it. In Marathi, Shankarrao Kharat's Bara Balutedar (1959), Tadipar (1961), Sangava (1962), Sutaka (1964), etc., N. R. Shende's Savale (1956), Bandhu Madhav's Janmathep and MazyaJalmachi Chittar Katha, Baburao Bagul's Jevha Mee Jat Charali Hoti, Maran

Swasta Hot Aahe and Sud, etc.,Yogiraj Waghmare's Udrek and Begad, Sukharam Hirwale's Vishagaganachya Kathi, Yogendra Meshram's Raktalleli Laktare, Arjun Dangle's Bandhavarchi Manasa, Waman Hoval's Benawad and Yelkot, Keshav Meshram's Hakikat ani Jatayu, Amitabha's Pad etc. are some remarkable anthologies.

Omprakash Valmiki (Salaam and Ghuspeithiye), Surajpal Chauhan, Jay Prakash Kardam, Mohandas Neimishray, Umeshkumar Singh, Ratankumar Sambhariya, Vipin Bihari Sanjeev, Jitendra Kumar, Bisariya, Kanchan Lata, Anita Rashmi in Hindi, Chennanna Valikan, Devnur Mahadev and Barguru Ramchandra in Kannada, T.K. Chattan Vaditala, C. Ayyappan, D. Rajan and Narayan in Malyalam and in Punjabi Kewalsingh Parwana are prominent Dalit short story writers.

Dalit Novel

Dalit characters and life never becomes protagonist of mainstream literature. Dalit intellectuals taking inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar started writing short stories and novel, has a protagonist from the Dalit community. These writers are, Annabhau Sathe (Fakira, Aavadi, Makadicha mal, Vaijanta, etc.), Shankarrao Kharat (Vasunaka, Mahimchi Khadi), N. R. Shende (Kajali Ratra), Shankarrao Suradkar (Aata Mi Kuthe Jaou?), N. B. Jadhav (Dr. Anjana, Rajabhau, Aparna), Haribhau Pagare (Ugapravartak, Jhunjar), H. G. Bansod (Muktisangram), Muralidhar Bhosekar (Siddharthachi Yashodhara, Kapilvastucha Rajkumar), J. V. Pawar (Balidan), Baburao Bagul (Sud), Keshav Meshram (Jatayu, Pokharan), etc. are the prominent Marathi Dalit novel writers.

Dalit Theatre and Plays

Dalit plays attack the hegemony of Hindu caste system and challenges the typical Indian social hierarchy. Beside the

panoramic representation of poor Dalits' life, Dalit plays gave the message of equality, liberty, fraternity and social justice. Since theatre were not affordable to Dalits, in comparison with other forms of literature, Dalit theatre or plays is less seen by public. Even then some playwrights have devoted their life to Dalit theatre. One and three act plays are popular among Dalit writers. Kisan Faguji Bandsode's Sant Chokhamela (1924), Gangadhar Pantavane's Mrutyu shala (1973) and Mukhavata (1976), Suresh Meshram's Raging (1974), Kamalakar Dahat's Narabali, Hatyakana and Trishulache Chavathe tok, Prabhakar Dupare's Sata Samudrapalikade, I. M. Narnavare's Vidrohache Pani Petale Aahe, Gol Gol Aagagadi (1978), Datta Bhagat's Chakravhuv and Thingi, Dada Dhanvijay's Akinchan and Vikalp (2005), Daya Pawar's Mumbai Nagari, Yogiraj Waghmare's Tamasha and Ago Je Ghadalech Nahi (1978), Premanand Gajvi's Ghalbhar Pani (1978) and Ekiek Shunya Shrikrushna Raut's Blind Show (1978), Hemant Khobragade's Suryasta, Ratnakar Matakari's Lokkatha are some remarkable Dalit plays which advocates Dalit conciousness and movement ideology. These plays show the real life of the oppressed and marginalized in India. Also these plays show the struggle of Dalits against injustice and atrocities. Dalit playwrights attacked Castism, blind belief, illiteracy, etc. and advocated Human values after Dr. Ambedkar. It is noteworthy here that these all plays are being staged on street, fairs, Jalsa's and Sahitya Sammelanas.

Dalit Autobiography

Dalit autobiography developed with other genres from the late 1970s. Autobiography became a prominent medium for Dalits to express themselves completely without any inhibition. These autobiographies covered life of Dalits who were crushed under the typical Indian social hierarchy. Thus they acted as the mirrors of the entire Dalit

community and revealed to the world the untold, unreserved and undisclosed life of the Dalits. "The autobiographies in Dalit literature are a record of Dalit Cultural Revolution. These are the graphs of Dalit pain and agony." (Nimbalkar 2006: p137)

The revelation of the life of Dalit through autobiographies is painful and sensitive. The various events of insult, exploitation, hunger and tortures of Dalits in all such Dalit autobiographies force readers of all strata to contemplate. Dalit autobiography not only gave an account of a Dalits life, but also depicted the story of sufferings of the entire community and their struggle for human rights. The detailed study of the development of autobiography has been studied in chapter four.

In a nutshell, present Dalits are ex-untouchables of India. The connotation of Dalit is synonymous to the term Depressed classes used in the British government and later they were categorised as scheduled classes. According to Dr. Ambedkar these Dalits were "Broken men" who settled as tribal races in India during pre-Indus period. As a part of pre-historic tribal wars they were defeated and come to the periphery of the village from the centre. During Buddha period these communities come under the influence of Buddha. According to Dr. Ambedkar Dalits were enforced with untouchability and strict caste system and in fourth century onward especially from Gupta dynasty practice of untouchability found its prominence in the country. Practice of untouchability in India brought dehumanisation to these Dalits who in the following centuries lost their fundamental human rights during nineteenth century Dalit movements initiated by Mahatma Phule and later Dr. Ambedkar and other social reformers in different regions of the country brought a massive awakening.

First educated intellectual generation of late 1950s and early 1960s in Maharashtra who inspired by Dr. Ambedkar's movement of social revolution and mass conversion into Buddhism of 1956, teachers and students started reacting against caste based unjust typical social hierarchy. Essential Dalit Consciousness, Protests against all kinds of exploitation and negation of values which were responsible for their Dalitness become the nature of the new literature. Literary works under various genres like, Poetry, Short Story, Novel, Autobiography, Essays, Critical Essays, etc. were bold and fearlessly taking advantage of 'right to speech and express' given to them by the Constitution of India.

Dalit literary movement is the offshoot of Dalit movement of emancipation initiated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and it was begun with Buddha. The influence of these two historical men could be taken as social influence, As Herbert Kelman gives three categories of social influence, change in the life of Dalits after the influence of Dr. Ambedkar and Buddha could be categorized as identification and internalisation. Dalit poetry and short stories started emerging from 1960s and later Dalit autobiographies and novels became popular first in Maharashtra and later spread in different regions

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Two

Buddha's Dhamma and Dr. Ambedkar's Revival of Buddhism

Part I

Pre-Buddha Period

The Pre Buddhist period was recorded with the rise of new State systems i.e. Gana Sangha and Monarchies and their conflicts for establishing superiority of the later over former. Till the time of Buddha, the age of "migration and settlement" was over, and the territorial elements had attained preponderance over the tribe in organization of the State. "The country was divided into a number of Janapadas which included monarchies as well as republics." (Pande 1974: p311) The expansion of agricultural economy due to surplus production into related merchandise and luxury was prominently growing. Vedic religious beliefs taken over the older beliefs by establishing the God systems and thereof superiority of the priest class over all the others. Established superiority of Vedic religion was challenged by the *samana*culture of the time. Buddhism and Jainism were close to the samana culture of the time. With the rise of Buddhism and Jainism a conflict between Astka i.e. believers in God and nastikas i.e. atheistic schools prominently began. The pre-Buddhist condition of slaves, the broken men, and

women was deteriorated which was assured dignity and self-respect by the new rationalistic schools. Therefore, values and morality taught by Buddha and Mahavira appealed to contemporary masses. The Pre-Buddhist period was prominently engaged broadly in two areas, first the expansion of States and second, the religious upheaval with the institutionalization of Vedic beliefs.

New Urbanization and State Systems

Small settlements were turned into Gama, Nagara and Mahanagara. Gama was the small village, Nagara was town and Mahanagara was significantly large city and a political centre. The reference of nigama and putbhedana found in Buddhist scripts were the exchange centers and market places. According to Romila Thapar, "The preceding period had been one of accommodation or confrontation between polities based on clan organization. Permanent settlement in a particular area gave a geographical identity to a clan, or a confederacy of clans." (Thapar 2002: p137)Development of political power came through maintaining of the possessions by certain clans which were identified as Gana Sangha, chiefdom or kingdoms. The political systems of the States were broadly monarchical and Gana Sangha. Wars between settlers and invaders of pre-historic period were replaced with the wars for the expansion of States in the ancient times. Monarchical States were often engaged in such wars over neighboring Ganas. Rational philosophical thoughts seem to be developed in Gana Sangha. "The connection between the Gana-Sanghas and the growth of various ideologies and belief systems, particularly Buddhist and Jaina, was due to many of these being rooted in the Gana-Sanghas". (Thapar 2002: p146) "The Gana-Sanghas were always under threat of being taken over by neighboring kingdoms. These kingdoms were urban based, often headed by kings who cared little for morality."(Omvedt 2003: p29) Two example of patricide is

the evidence of such immorality. The contemporary of Buddha, King Pasenadi of Kosala and King Bimbisara of Magadha were killed by their own son for power.

Occupation and Trades

Contemporary society was engaged in the agricultural production especially in wet rice cultivation, wheat and barley. People lived in cities for various occupations like, art and craft, businessmen, State employees, messengers, etc. remained away from the agricultural works required grains and other products. Therefore, a trade based on agricultural produce was initiated in cities. "Both urbanization and the formation of states are dependent on the realization of a surplus in production and on the mechanisms by which this was made possible. An agricultural surplus was necessary to town's people who did not produce their own food and it provided a base for economic diversification." (Thapar 2002: p142) Blacksmithing, pottery, carpentry, cloth-weaving, basket weaving were such tradescomes up as responsible factors for the urbanization and commercial activities in the towns. "The growth of towns and commerce and the organization of trade and craft into guilds make the social landscape of this age quite distinct from that of the preceding period. The emergence of money is noticeable and it must have involved critical changes in social life in its turn." (Pande 1974) Wealthy Businessmen like Anathpindika besides Royal men came forward as the patronage to Buddhism during Buddha's time and later. Urbanization required infrastructure for the functioning of the urban centres generating employment. A large number of manpower was moving towards the urban centres brought into social change on economic base.

The social change occurred during the period is indicative of widened gapbetween poor and rich, and

development of new urban class. According to D.D. Kosambi:

> "The existence of new classes in the Gangetic basin of the sixth century is undeniable. The free peasants and farmers were one. The neo-Vedic pastoral class of vaisyas within the tribe was replaced by agriculturists for whom the tribe had ceased to exist. Traders had become so wealthy that the most important person in an eastern town was generally the Sreshthi. The term, not known earlier, is derived from the word for Superior', or 'pre-eminent'. The Sreshthi was actually a financier or banker, sometimes the head of a trade guild. Even absolute, despotic kings treated these Shreshtis with respect, though they had no direct voice in politics." (Kosambi 1964: p88)

Religious beliefs

During pre-Buddha period people worshiped many God, Goddesses and Deities. At the same time concepts or ideas like ghosts and spirits gripthe contemporary minds and thereof fear of life already prevailed. "They had come to believe, most probably through the influence of dreams, in the existence of souls, or ghosts, or spirits, inside their own bodies, and they had yet learned to discriminate in this respect between themselves and the other animals and objects around them which seemed to be possessed of power and movement." (Davids 1972: p13) "The worship of Yakshas was widespread...the Yakshas were spirits, often connected with trees and granted wordly desires, esp. progeny and wealth." (Pande 1974: p318) Fearing from unknown danger people started giving importance to priests and Brahmins as the knower of Vedas. Pleasing Gods for winning wars and good crop through the yajnas and thereof sacrifices was very common. Attracting patronages from the rich communities and royal families some special Yajnas were developed within a short span of time and lower communities were not given chance to participate in such

rituals. On such development of Yajana rituals Romila Thapar observes:

> "Gradually the more spectacular rituals attracted patronage, as they had a public function, and only the upper castes could participate. They were also the arenas for the competition between sacred and temporal authority. "It has been argued that insistence on performing rituals was more important than the dogma of belief, that orthopraxy was more elevated than orthodoxy. The ritual of sacrifice was believed to sustain the well-being of the clan and the system. Thus the devaluing of the yajna by heterodoxy in later times was a significant challenge." (Thapar 2002: p128)

A belief was developed that God accepts such sacrifices and grants the wishes to people. "During such sacrifices the wealth of king was displayed in such a way that he established his power over the subjects. Vedic hymns and the Brahmin got importance in such rituals. The Raja's gift to the priests enriched and empowered Brahmins." (Thapar 2002: p129) In the later period, "the centrality of yajna became a characteristic of Vedic Brahmanism." (Thapar 2002: p135) Increased number of sacrifices caused for the killing of the domestic animals used for agricultural purposes which were later opposed by the Buddha, Mahavira and Samanas (Ascetics) of the time.

Vedic Philosophy

The Pre-Buddhist period has already few philosophical schools linked to the Vedas and samana traditions. There were some Vedic sages who had entered into speculations of a philosophical nature. These sages were: "(i) Aghamarshana, (2) Prajapati Parmesthin, (iii) Brahamanaspati, (iv) Anila, (v) Dirghatamas, (vi) Narayan, (vii) Hiranyagarbha and (viii) Vishvakarman." (Ambedkar 1997: p81) Before enlightenment, Siddhartha Gotama was

taught Samkya philosophy by Adar Kalam and Dhyana Samadhi by UddakaRamputta.

Veda stands for the mantras and the Brahmanas. Mantras means hymns addressed to God and Goddesses and the collection of these mantras are called Samhitas viz. Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva. The Brahmanas unlike mantras are written in prose which is elaboration of complicated ritualism of Veda. The appendages to these Brahmanas are called Aranyakas. The aranyakas are the transitions from rituals to the philosophic thoughts. Also the concluding portions of the aranyakas are called as the Upanishads. These are intensely philosophical and spiritual in nature. According to Gail Omvedt, "Upanishadic speculations, ranging from perhaps 700 BCE to the first century of Common Era, revolved to a large degree on hypothesizing on individual self or atman as the subject of all the round of rebirths in the framework of karma and rebirth. This involved a transformation of the felt, subjective into a universal, primordial entity that was abstract and eternal." (Omvedt 2003: p47) Upanishad discusses mainly the true self i.e. 'atman'.

The Brahmanas

The Vedas and Brahmanas are called as *Shrutis.* These are sacred and beyond any questionSalvation of the soul, thereof Vedic sacrifices, and observance of religious rites are the concern of the Brahmanas. "It has theory of ideal religion as well as theory of ideal society. The ideal society was named under *Chaturvarna* the four fold system of society i.e. Brahmin at the top, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. As a matter of rule there cannot be social equality among these four classes. They must be bound together by the rule of graded inequality." (Ambedkar 1997: p87) The fourfold social system was assigned with the occupations.

Brahmins to learn teach and perform religious rites, Kshatriyas to fight, Vaishyas to trade and Shudra to serve all these three classes. The right to education was given to the topthree classes only.

The Brahmana categorises human life into four stages viz. Brahmacharya (for education), Grahasthashrama (married life), Vanprastha (Familiarity with the life of hermit) and Sannysa (search of God). "The benefits of these stages were open only to the male members of the three superior classes. The first stage was not open to the shudras and women. Equally the last stage was not open to the shudras and women." (Ambedkar 1997: p89)

According to Brahmana, the self or the atma is formless and changeless identical in all beings, it was the same as Brahmanas. "The atma 'self' is also identical with one of the Vedic god. The word 'atman' originally meant life-breath and then gradually acquired the meanings of feeling, mind, soul and spirit." (Sharma 2003: p19) "The play of the world, its seasons and changes, its sorrows and joys, was only that in the end, a play, an illusion of the eternal spirit. The notions of Karma and rebirth were accepted as part of this; indeed they were used to provide the major rational for the Varna system." (Omvedt 2003: p48) The doctrine of Karma is important in Brahmana." It was part of the subject of transmigration of soul. On the question as to where did the soul land with the new body in a new birth? According to the Brahmanas, it depends on a man's deed in his past life. In other word, it depends on his karma." (Ambedkar 1997: p89) One of the important objects assigned to men by Brahmanaswas the search of eternal truth.

Samkya

Contemporary to Buddha, the Samkhya Philosophy was quite popular. It was believed to be founded by Sage

Kapiala, but his time period is unclear. Siddhartha Gotam after his renunciation was attracted to learn the thought system to find the answers to his quest on human sufferings. Sage Adar Kalam a Brahman was the master of this school of thought. Siddhartha became his disciple.

"The Sankya means right knowledge as well as number." (Sharma 2003: p150) It is the oldest of the orthodox philosophical systems in Vedism. It espouses dualism between consciousness and matter by postulating two "irreducible, innate and independent realities 1) Purusha i.e. self or atma (Consciousness) 2) Prakriti (creative energy)". The Prakriti is the unity of three gunas: activity (rajas), inactivity (tamas) and harmony (sattva). An imbalance in the intertwined relationship of these three dispositions causes the world to evolve from Prakriti. This evolution from Prakriti causes the creation of 23 constituents, including intellect (buddhi), ego (ahamkara) and mind (manas). The purusha is the soul, the subject, the knower. It is neither body nor sensesnor brain nor body nor ego nor an intellect. Consciousness is its essence.

Samkhya believes in satkaryavada. All material effects are the modification of prakriti. They pre-exist in the eternal bosomofprakriti and simply come out of it at the time of creation and return to it at the time of dissolution. According to Chandrashekhar Sharma,

> "The original samkhya was monistic and theistic. But classical samnkhya under the influence of materialism, Jainism and early Buddhism became atheistic. It is orthodox because it believes in the authority of Veda. It does not establish the non-existence of god. It only shows that prakriti and purushas are sufficient to explain this universe and therefore, there is no reason for postulating a hypothesis of god." (Sharma 2003: p164.)

Samana Culture

According to Gail Omvedt, "There were two main contending cultural-religious currents of the first millennium BCE which were unique to India and which provided the context for the Buddha's teachings. These were based on the Brahmanism and the Samana traditions." (Omvedt 2003: p31) Since the Vedic Brahmanism was in vogue at the time, departure from the religious limitations a change occurred in the socio-religious context. A tradition of retiring from the household responsibility and community had begun. People started living away from the habitation, living in dense jungles and in caves. These people were called as Samanas or Parivrajakas i.e. ascetics. These ascetics were living individually or in groups. They lived on the forest extracts or on the alms offered by lay men. "The beginning of this tradition was in remote past, even in pre-history and pre-Aryan period. In the Vedic period there existed two distinct religious and cultural traditions- strictly orthodox and Aryan traditions of Brahmanas, and on the fringe of their society the struggling culture of the Munis and Sramanas, most probably going back to pre-Vedic and pre-Aryan origins." (Pande 1974: p261) Romila Thapar found two purposes in this tradition of asceticism:

> "To acquire more than ordinary powers by extraordinary control over the physical body, as in yoga, and through dhyana, meditation; or to seek freedom from having to adjust to an increasingly regulated society by physically withdrawing from it, evidenced by the practice of renunciation at a young age being regarded as a distancing from Vedic ritual and from the rules of the normative texts." (Thapar 2002: p132)

The *samana* tradition was unique in its form seeking alternative way of life. "There were also some aspects of Vedic tradition that encouraged austerities and as Brahmanism developed, tapascarya usually meant practicing

austerities in order to gain magical power (Shakti). However a major source of the practice was indigenous and non-Vedic, and for the purpose, as the samana used it, of gaining liberation from round of rebirths." (Bronkhorst 2000)

Vedas has set philosophy for life, death and thereafter. Therefore, many questions remain unanswered for some curious men like, what happens to men after death? What happened to the personality? Has anything remained behind? Whether heaven or Hell is in existence? What is the role of karma and rebirth at all? "Asceticism of the time was revolving round of such queries and seeking solutions through various ways. Contrary to the earlier times, the first millennium BCE saw in many societies the rise of consciousness about the individual." (Omvedt 2003: p32) "The rise of asceticism gave birth to the parallel culture to the Vedic Brahmanism and draws attention of the contemporary society. Renunciation of social obligations, implicit in asceticism, encouraged a kind of counter-culture and this became an accepted strand of religious and social thought in India." (Thapar 2002: p132) Samanas who acquired a specific knowledge returned to the social sphere and guide the people. Such ascetics were taken as the threat to the established religion.

Siddhartha Gotama according to the traditional Buddhism witnessed the Parivrajaka as the fourth scene as one of the causes for his renunciation. He later becomes ascetic at the hand of Bhardwaja of Kapilvastu and left for the deepforest. Buddha and Mahavira along with Ajivika and Charvakaare often linked with the samana traditions. In the samana tradition there were about sixty two schools of thoughts that were available at the time. Puran Kassapa's Akriyawada, Makhali Ghoshal's Ajivika, Ajit Kesakamble's Ucchedwada, Pakhuda Kaccayana's Annyonywad, and

Sanjay Belputta's Vikshepwada were some of the popular schools of this tradition.

Ajivika and Charvaka

Ajivika school of thought was contemporary to Buddha and Mahavira. It is considered as the heterodoxy ancient Indian philosophy that took its origin from the samana tradition. "The Ajivikas belonged to an ancient Indian sect of naked wanderings ascetics who believed in karma, fatalism and extreme passivity." (Jayaram 2015) It was atheistic in nature. Makkhali Ghoshala of Magadha is considered as the founder of this school of thought. "*For* Ajivikas, the chains of causality which produces karma and led to rebirth were inexorable; no intervention of 'will' could affect them, the chain simply went on and on. Life (including what we see as good and evil, pain and pleasure) simply goes on until it comes to an end". (Omvedt 2003: p34) Ajivikas believed in fate rather than the Karma.

The Charvakas were the exponent of egoistic hedonism. Since they were popular among the people, so they were called as Lokayatas. According to Charvaka, the only means of valid knowledge and reject the validity of inference was perception. They were Materialist, Positivist and Atheist. They rejected the the authority of the Vedas, and Supremacy of Brahmanas. They were not having belief in pre existence of soul, future life, Law of Karma, Heaven and Hell, existence of God.

Chaturyamsamvarvad of Mahavira i.e. Jain philosophy

Jainism is one of the two survival philosophies of Samana Traditions besides Buddhism till the date. WardhamanMahavira (599-527 BCE) was the head of this school. He was contemporary to Buddha and known as Nigantha Nathaputta. According to the traditional teachings

of Jainism, they are eternal and hence have no founder. According to New World Encyclopedia, "The Jains believe that their faith has come down to them from antiquity through a series of 24 Tirthankaras, the earliest of whom was Rsabhadeva and the most recent, Mahavira. Therefore Mahavira is not regarded as the founder of Jainism, but as the one who gave a new orientation to Jainism and shaped the modern faith." (New World Encyclopaedia 2015) Samana tradition was developed on the line of rationalism. Therefore, most of the philosophers attack on the contemporary beliefs in superstitions and illogical religious rites. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy maintains that "like those of Buddha, Mahavira's doctrines were formulated as reaction to and rejection of Brahmanism (religion based on the Hindu scriptures, the Vedas, and Upanishads) then taking shape." (Webb 2016) Jainism is therefore taken as the atheistic tradition of heterodox schools of philosophy. "They were extreme anti-fatalist, Kriyawadi in their own terms, seeing the individual soul as primary and emphasizing its moral responsibility." (Omvedt 2003: p39)

Jainism is dualistic in its form. According to it matter and souls are entirely different substances. "They take universe as eternal and matter and souls being equally uncreated. Jainism accepted the existence of Gods in the universe, but they reject their control over the universe. The Gods and other superhuman beings are all just as subject to karma and rebirth as human beings are." (Webb 2015) "Mahavira taught that the soul had to undergo rebirth because of the bad karmas done in the past life and in the present life. One must therefore get over the bad, he suggested, by 'tapacharya'" (Ambedkar 1997: p98).

Jainism gives ethics and morality in life as supreme important to keeponeself pure. Like Buddhists, Mahavira also taught five precepts:

i. Not to kill (Ahimsa)
ii. Not to steal (asteya)
iii. Not to tell a lie (Satya)
iv. Not to have property and (aparigrah)
v. to observe celibacy (brahmascharya)

New World Encyclopedia maintains, "For lay people, chastity means confining sexual experience to the marriage relationship; for monks and nuns, it means complete celibacy. Non-possessiveness for lay people means merely being content with what one has; for the monastics it means having almost no possessions at all, not even clothing, and begging for food." (New World Encyclopaedia 2015) Jainism observes 'ahimsa' non-violence as a cardinal rule very strictly. They cover their mouth to avoid killing of any insects unknowingly. To observe this Jainism follows vegetarianism. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy maintains:

> "According to the earliest Jain documents, plants both are and contain living beings, although one-sensed beings, so even a vegetarian life does harm. This is the why the ideal way to end one's life, for a Jain, is to sit motionless and starve to death. Mahavira himself and other great Jain saints are said to have died this way. That is the only way to be sure you are doing no harm to any living being." (Webb 2015)

Siddhartha Gotama "The Buddha"

Siddhartha Gautama (563 BC-483 BC) was the prince of *Sakya State* which was one of the few Ganas (Republic states) in North India. "These have been called tribal republics." (Omvedt 2003: p28) His father *Suddhodhana* was the *Kshatriya Raja* of the SakyaGana Sangha. "The compound term ganasangha or ganarajya has connotation of gana,

referring to those who claim to be equal status and Sangha, meaning an assembly, or rajya, referring to governance." (Thapar 2002: p147) "Sakyas were a warrior clan" (Bhaskar 2009: p1). The capital city of the State was 'Kapilvastu, "perhaps after the name of the great rationalist Kapila" (Ambedkar 1997: p2). The State had many ruling families who ruled the State in turns. King Suddhodhana became Raja through such turn at the time of Siddhartha's birth. The influence of this democratic way of State systems could be seen from the organization of Buddha's Sangha later. The main occupation of these Gana Sangha was agriculture and mainly wet-rice cultivation. Suddhodhana possessed a large land for cultivation where he employed at least one thousand ploughs at a time.

These Gana Sanghas seem to have egalitarian way of life and their own older belief systems challenging Vedic religion. Romila Thapar indicated here a conflict between the orthodoxy of traditions and these Gana Sangha:

> "The more independent-minded settlers of the plains, disgruntled with the increasing strength of orthodoxy in territories evolving into kingdoms, moved upto towards the hills where they established communities more in keeping with egalitarian traditions, at least among the ruling clan. The rejection of Vedic orthodoxy by the ganasanghas indicates that they may have been maintaining an older or alternative tradition". (Thapar 2002: p147)

Buddha's rejection of Vedic culture on the basis of rationality linked with these resistances between Kshatriyas of ganasangha and the Brahmins.

Siddhartha was born to father Suddhodhana and mother Mahamaya. He lost his mother on fifth day of his birth, later his aunt Mahaprajapati became his foster mother. A prediction was made by the great seer Asita and others that if he stays in life he would become Chakravartin Raja, or if he

left his household life he would become Buddha. Therefore, King Suddhodhana keeps his son away from sorrows and misery. His education was started at the age of eight. Eight Brahmins who interpreted Mahamaya's dream were his first teachers, later he was sent to *Saabamitta* for Veda and Upanishadas and *Bhardwaja* taught him concentration and meditation. He observed traditions and culture of the clan as agriculture community. He participated in the festival of *Vapramangal,* a rustic festival on the day of sowing. Like other sakyas he too engaged himself in ploughing. "Though a man of learning, he did not despise manual labour*."* (Ambedkar 1997: p10) From the early childhood, he was a thoughtful and kept himself away from the common games of children like hunting. "He belonged to warrior class and had been taught archery and use of weapons. But he did not like causing unnecessary injury. He refused to join hunting parties." (Ambedkar 1997: p10) Instead he tried to engage his friends to join him for meditation. He taught them right posture and to fix their mind on subject. At the age of sixteen he was married to Yashodhara, daughter of Dandapani of Sakya. He had a son Rahula from this marriage.

The Great Renunciation and Nibbana

His great renunciation came at the age of twenty Nine. According to traditional Buddhism, his renunciation was the result of four scenes of misery and sorrows i.e. old aged man, diseased man, dead man and an ascetic. The confrontation with bitter truth of life shatters him severely and he decided renunciation 'Parivrajaka' in search of truth or solutions to human suffering. Since Buddha developed his teachings on the basis of rationalism and reasons, Dr. Ambedkar wasn't convinced with this traditional theory of Siddhartha's renunciation. On the basis of other historical and evidences from the Buddhist canon, he proposed

another theory for the renunciation in his book *The Buddha and His Dhamma.* Dr. Ambedkar held the conflict between Sakyas and Koliyas on the issue of river water principle responsible factor for Siddhartha's renunciation.

According to the custom of Sakyas, Siddhartha became the member of Sakya Sangha at the age of twenty. The Sakya Sangha was the supreme body which took decisions in the interest of State democratically. A turning point came to his life when the conflict between Sakyas and Koliyasroseupto the level of war on the issue of distribution of river Rohini's water for agricultural purpose. *Sakyas* declared a war upon *Koliyas*. Being the prince of the State and member of Sakya Sangha, Siddhartha had to support the war which he was not agreed to. Failed to convince *Sakya Sangha* for no war, he renounced his family life to prevent a war between the two States. Contrary to the traditional belief that Siddhartha left his home during midnight when the entire city was fast asleep, Dr. Ambedkar with evidences proposed that his decision of becoming Parvrajaka was well known to his parents and wife. Though they tried to dissuade him from his decision, he remained firm. He became Parivrajaka at the hands of Bhardwaja of Kapilvastu and immediately left the city. He spends the next six years in learning contemporary philosophies from the great masters like Alar Kalama and Uddaka Ramputta. He learnt yoga and meditations to find a solution to human sufferings. Meanwhile he learned from the five Parivrajakas that the Koliyas and Sakyas made peace. While contemplating on this news, he asked himself, "now that the war is over is there any problem left to me? Does my problem end because the war has ended?" (Ambedkar 1997: p57) He thought it was not. Then he reflected on the further purpose of his homelessness, he came to the point that "the conflict between nations is occasional. But the conflict between

classes is constant and perpetual. It is this which is the root of all sorrow and suffering in the world. True, I left home on account of war. But I cannot go back home although the war has ended. I see now that my problem has become wider. I have to find a solution for this problem of social conflict." (Ambedkar 1997 p57-58) After spending six long years in learning contemporary thoughts and yogic practices, he didnot get any clue as solutions to human suffering. Leaving aside the practice of self-torture, he started working on his own thought system. At the age of thirty five, he got Nibbana (Enlightenment) under the Peepal tree near Gaya in today's Bihar. He became Buddha. Nibbana is the state of supreme knowledge of science of human life and solutions to the human sufferings. To preach common people the art of living he formed a Sangha of ordained disciples. He travelled to many States to preach his philosophy till his demise at the ripened age of 81. Many kings like Asoka and Kanishka, businessmen, priests, ascetics, and all strata of men and women became his disciples. Buddhism became the chief religion of India for many centuries later.

Teachings of Buddha and Basic tenets of his Philosophy

In Buddhism two major streams of Buddhism exist, i.e. Mahayana and Hinyana or Thervada. Buddhist countries are divided into these streams of practices for centuries. Therefore, the ideas and practices over the period of times have been modified by the scholars according to the requirements of time. India in particularly following the oldest stream i.e. Theravada, a Pali canon. Dr. Ambedkar, who embraced Buddhism in 1956 along with his millions of followers, accepted that his idea of Buddhism is close to Theravada. After this great conversion Dalit-Ambedkarite writers were influenced by the Buddhism introduced by Dr. Ambedkar. Therefore, the Buddhist philosophy has been taken here for the study of this chapter that is influenced by

the Thervada Buddhism and especially from Dr. Ambedkar's The Buddha and His Dhamma.

The Pre-Buddha India was rapidly approaching towards urbanization and a new civilization. It was taking shape under the fourfold Varnashrama dharma which was based on inequality and graded society. Following centuries witnessed the degradation of Shudra, Dalits and women under such hierarchical society. Contrary to this graded society, the rise of Buddha and his Sangha developed hope for another practical society based on liberty, equality, fraternity and justice. Buddha's simple teachings and way of life brought a great impact on the socio-religious and cultural life of contemporary society. Rabindranath Tagore in his essay on Buddha and Buddhism observes, "During the period of Buddhism the doctrine of deliverance flourished which reached all mankind and released man's inner resources from neglect and self-insult." (Tagore 1983: p14) Buddhism appealed to the contemporary intellect and awakened the idle mind. Appealed by the Buddha's treatment of equality and respect to self-dignity, the marginalized communities and ordinary men immediately accepted Buddhism. "Gotama Buddha, though born of an aristocratic and ruling class, lived the life of an ordinary man, discarding the narrow distinctions of caste, rank and wealth. He knew the world. He was not only a man, but never professed to be anything more than a man." (Narasu 2002: p19) Buddha's teachings and thoughts are reflected upon every aspect of personal and social life. Teachings and discourses of Buddha were collected after his Parinibbana. Later Buddhist schools of Hinayana and Mahayana and commentaries developed by Buddhist scholars arranged the Buddha thoughts into proper philosophy.

The Rationality of Buddhism

In such a time where ideas of God, Goddesses and ghosts and spirits, salvation and life after death were prevailed, Buddha came as teacher without any proclamation as super human being. "Contemporary schools of thought affiliated to Vedic claiming the salvation through religious practices and rituals, Buddha claimed neither revelation nor promised to give salvation. A revealed religion is so called because it is a message of god to his creatures to worshiptheir maker (i.e. God) and to save their souls." (Ambedkar 1997: p217) Buddha's teachings were not based on any dogma or beliefs in God and Supernatural entity; it was the inquiry into human life, their sorrows and sufferings of all strata of men. "Its goal is not heaven or a union with god or Brahman, but to find a refuge for man from the miseries of the world in the safe haven of an intellectual and ethical life through self-conquest and self-culture." (Narasu 2002: p21) Buddha's teachings were systematic approach towards human problems and miseries and he brought logical solutions to them through self-efforts. Therefore, Dr. Ambedkar called Buddhism as a discovery by Buddha. "A discovery in the sense that it is the result of inquiry and investigations into the human life on the earth and understanding of the working of human instincts with which man is born, the moulding of his instincts and dispositions which man has formed as a result of history and tradition and which are working to his detriment." (Ambedkar 1997: pp217-218) Buddha only claimed that he was a way giver and not a salvation giver. "Salvation must be sought by each for himself by his own efforts." (Ambedkar 1997: p218) It was a previously established conception that the worshipof some deities helps in securing salvation and good birth in next life. Contrary to such claim and speculation Buddha brought a revolutionary thesis. "He proclaimed a salvation which each man could gain for himself and by himself, in

this world, during this life, without any the least reference of God, or to God, either great or small." (Davids 1972: pp28-29)

Rational understanding is the key of Buddhism. Buddha invokes the enquiry into contemporary mind about anything which is related to one's life. According to this belief which was established in the past or in present should be questioned particularly about its reliability by the self. In one of his discourse to Kalamas of Kesaputta town in Kosala, Buddha advised them to stand on the firm rock of fact and reasons only.

> "O Kalamas, is just what I have said. What I have said is "do not go merely by what you hear; do not go merely by has been handed down from one to another; do not go merely by subtleties of reasoning; do not go by subtleties of logic; do not go by considerations based upon mere appearances; do not go merely by agreeable beliefs and views; do not go merely by the word of some ascetic or superior. Only when of yourselves you indeed know: 'These things are insalutary; these things are blameworthy; these things are reprehended by the wise; these things being done or attempted lead to ill-being and to suffering'- then, Kalamas, you should put them away." (Ambedkar 1997 pp277-278)

Buddhism has no belief to anything which is not the outcome of knowledge and factual realisation. Buddha distinguishes "the mere reception of knowledge" and "the knowledge of the truth". The impact of this aspect of rationality in Buddhism made his follower distinguish between right and wrong. Whatever is rightly spoken and free from an error that is the teaching of the Buddha." (Narasu 2002: p25) Buddha believes that, whathas not passed the test of reason and experience cannot be right to men. The first Buddhist council after the demise of Buddha in the leadership of Mahakassapa, compiled the Buddhist canon on the basis of these directions of Buddha.

Buddha taught his followers to believe in oneself for one's development, no other person of supernatural being can help gaining happiness and peace. No miracle or wonder came to one's rescue because they are merely assumptions. "Mere beliefs and dogmas cannot emancipate a person."(Narada 1988: p96) In his last words to Ananda on the issue of appointment of Buddha's successor, he spoke as follows, " Surely" Surely, Ananda, should there be any one who harbours the thought, It is I who will lead the brotherhood,' or the Order is dependent on me,' it is he who should lay down instructions in any matter concerning the Order. The Tathagata thinks not, Ananda that he should lead the Brotherhood or the Brotherhood is dependent on him. Why, then, should he leave instruction in any matter concerning the Order? Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye refuges to yourselves. Holdfast to the truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the truth. Look not for refuge to any one beside yourselves." This was the rationality of Buddhism which is crystal clear like water appealed to the savage races in the contemporary times which were indulged in worshiping the unknown spirits.

The Middle Way and Man at the Centre of Dhamma

Buddha in his first discourse to five disciples in Sarnath which is known as DhammachkkaPavattana "The Wheel of Dhamma," claimed that "he was the believer in the MadhyamaMarga (Majjhima Patipada), the middle path, which is neither the path of pleasure nor the path of self-mortification." (Ambedkar 1997: p120) According to Buddha the former retards the one's spiritual progress and the later weakens one's intellect. "He criticized both the views as he realized by personal experience their futility and enunciated the most practicable, rational and beneficial path, which alone leads to perfect purity and absolute divine." (Narada 1988: p77) According to Buddha both the extremes

stimulates the passion and the middle way leads to the subjugation of passion resulted into peace. In the same discourse Buddha maintained that the middle path is none other than the Noble Eight fold path.

Budhha's quest began in search of the causes of the sufferings to men. Therefore, Buddha's philosophy and teachings revolves round the human life. It has nothing to do with the god and soul. In fact emancipation of human being is at the centre of his philosophy. In the first sermon, Buddha claimed that "the centre of his Dhamma is man and the relation of man to man in his life on earth." (Ambedkar 1997: p121)

The Four Noble truths (CattariAriyaSaccani)

The Four noble truths are held as the foundation of Buddhism. The realization of suffering and the cessation of suffering are at its base. This was the ultimate discovery of Buddha for which he became Parivrajaka. Saccha in Pali "that which is" means truth.

The first noble truth is dukkha i.e. suffering. Birth, decay, disease, death, unfulfilment of wishes is all subject to suffering. "As a feeling dukkha means that which is difficult to be endured". (Narada 1988: p85) The second truth deals with the mental attitude of men towards the external objects of sense. "The causes of sufferings are attachment and desire." (Narada 1988: p86) The third truth is the complete cessation of sufferings i.e. attainment of enlightenment. "Nibbana is the ultimate goal of Buddhists. It could be achieved in this life itself by the total eradication of all attachment to the external world." (Narada 1988: p86) The fourth noble truth is the path of nibbana i.e. Noble Eightfold Path. The four noble truths are the basis of any person seeking his ultimate goal. According to Buddha, "when the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these truths

became perfectly clear to me, then only did I acknowledge that I had gained the incomparable supreme enlightenment". (Narada 1988: p86) To attain nibbana i.e. the end of all sufferings in this life, according to Buddha, he gave three ways to be practiced by men, The Path of purification, The Path of righteousness, and The Path of Virtues. "Mahayana Buddhism regards four noble truths as a preliminary teaching for people not ready for its own teachings." (Singh 2009: p108)

The Five Precepts

The path of purity means five precepts (Pacasilani) to be observed by men for the purity of mind. These are held as the fundamental moral code of conduct in Buddhism.

i. Not to injure or Kill
ii. Not to steal or appropriate to oneself anything which is belongs to another
iii. Not to speak untruth
iv. Not to indulge in lust
v. Not to indulge in intoxicating drinks (Ambedkar 1997: p122)

The Noble Eightfold Path

The Noble Eightfold Path is the fourth noble truth discovered by Buddha. It is also treated as the path to end the sufferings and attainment of Nibbana. Walpola Rahula said of the eightfold path, "practically the whole teaching of the Buddha, to which he devoted himself during 45 years, deals in some way or other with this path." (O'Brien 2015) The discourse on Noble Eightfold Path is considered as the "turning of the Dhamma wheel." The symbolical eight spokes of the wheel represents the eight paths. "It is also called as the morality of Buddhism, and Buddhism the moral life in no mere adjunct but its very core and essence." (Narasu 2002: p126) In his *Book Buddha or Karl Marx*, Dr. Ambedkar commented that the aim of the Noble Eightfold Path was to establish the kingdom of righteousness and

thereby to banish sorrow and unhappiness from the face of the world. The Noble Eightfold Path is as follows:

1. **Samma Ditthi (Right View):** The right way to consider about life. The end of sammaditthi is the destruction of ignorance. (Ambedkar1997: p124) it could be translated as right perspective, right vision or right understanding.
2. **Samma Sankappo (Right Thought):** Right aims, aspirations and ambitions for one's life. It could be translated as right aspiration or right resolve.
3. **Samma Vacca (Right Speech):** to Speak true and kind words. Abstaining from lying, decisive speech, abusive speech, and idle chatter.
4. **Samma Kamnato (Right Conduct):** It teaches right behavior. Abstaining from, killing, stealing, and illicit sex is called right kammanto.
5. **Samma Ajivo (Right Livelihood):** There are good and bad ways to earn livelihood. Through the good ways one earns one's livelihood without causing harm to other. Buddha forbids few occupations which are harmful to the human society i.e. trading of arm and weapons, intoxicant drinks, poisons, killing animals and cheating.
6. **Samma Vyayamo (Right Effort):** a worthwhile life means doing our best at all times and having good will towards others. "By making right efforts, a Buddhist practitioner is considered to be engaging in an effort that is wholesome in terms of karma; that is, in terms of that efforts ultimate consequences to the practitioner". (Singh 2009: p116)
7. **Samma Sati (Right Mindfulness and Thoughtfulness):** It means constant wakefulness of the mind. Watch and ward by the mind over the evil passion. (Ambedkar 1997: p126)

8. **Samma Samadhi (Right Concentration):** Focus on one thought at a time. It gives a habit to the mind to think of good and always to think good. (Ambedkar 1997: p127)

Pali 'Samma' here denotes completion, togetherness, and coherence, and which can also carry the sense of "perfect" or "ideal". (Singh 2009: p110)

The noble eightfold path is often classified into three broad areas or paths i.e. Panna (wisdom), Sila (Moral Conduct) and Samadhi (Mental Discipline).

a. **Panna (The Wisdom path)** comprised of Right View and Right Thought.
b. **Sila (The Moral Conduct Path)** comprised of Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood
c. **Samadhi (Mental Discipline Path)** comprised of Right Efforts, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

According to Narada Thera, these factors that comprise the noble eightfold path signify eight mental properties (Cetasikas) collectively found in four classes of supermundane consciousness (Lokuttar Citta) whose object is nibbana. (Narada 1988: p332)

The Three Essential Principles of Buddhist Philosophy

Anitya (Impermanence), Anatta (non-soul), and Nibbana (Enlightenment) are the essential principles of Buddhist philosophy and the three universal characteristics described by the Buddha. Both the main traditions of Buddhism i.e. Mahayana and Hinayana have the similar understanding on these principles.

The Doctrine of Impermanence (Anitya)

According to Buddha everything in this samsara is bound to change. Everything is conditioned to change or in a state of flux. "Changeableness is a characteristic of everything

that is conditioned. All conditioned things are constantly changing, not remaining static for two consecutive moments. Mind, in fact, changes even faster than matter." (Narada 1979: p462) The theory of impermanence has three aspects:

a. Impermanence of Composite things

Transformation of matters from one form to the other form is the impermanence of composite things. Matter combined to form a life after death return to the respective element. According to Buddhist Scholar Asaga, the founder of Vijnanvada "The body of a living being consists of the combination of four great elements, viz., earth, water, fire and air, and when this combination is resolved into the four component elements, dissolution ensues. "This is what is called the impermanence of a composite entity." (Ambedkar 1997: p240) According to Buddha where there is life, death is inevitable.

b. Impermanence of Life

The moment once lived by us is passed, it cannot return again. A man grows from adolescent, childhood, teen, mature man, and old will never remain the same. This is called as impermanence of life. "A human being is always changing, always growing. He is not the same at two different moments of his life". (Ambedkar 1997: p240)

c. Impermanence of self-nature of conditioned things or Sunnyata

It is a logical deduction of the theory of impermanence. "To realize that every living being will die sometime or other is a very easy matter to understand. But it is not quite so easy to understand how a human being can go on changing-becoming-while he is alive". (Ambedkar 1997: pp240-241)

According to the founder of Madhyamika Nagarjuna, "it is on account of sunnyata that everything becomes possible;

without it nothing in the world would be possible." (Sogen 2009: p14) Dr. Ambedkar commented upon sunnyata,

> "If things were not subject to continual change but were permanent and unchangeable, the evolution of all of life from one kind to the other and the development of living things would come to a dead stop. If human beings died or changed but had continued always in the same state what would the result have been? The progress of the human race would have come to a dead halt". (Ambedkar 1997: p241)

A Buddhist accepts that life that is constantly changing so also the universe, therefore, death is inevitable. A woman named Kisagotami who lost her young son came to Buddha and wanted Buddha to make her dead son alive by his powers. Buddha taught her the aspect of impermanence of life by asking her to bring few mustard seeds from such a home which never has seen death of a kin. Found none of such a home in town, she returned to Buddha at the sunset with the learned lesson of impermanence herself.

Doctrine of Non-Soul or Without Soul (Anatta)

The doctrine of soullessness is the root of Buddhism. In Buddhism there is no place to the soul as claimed in Hinduism. Buddha's theory of non-soul is the part of his theory of Namarupa. Namarupa is the collective name of sentient being; it is composed of physical and mental elements. Four elements as earth, water, fire and air constitute the body. Consciousness is result of the combination of these four elements. Dr. Ambedkar gave analogy to the rise of consciousness on the basis of science, "there is an electric field and wherever there is an electric field it is always accompanied by a magnetic field. No one knows how the magnetic field is created or how it arises. But it always exists along with the electric field". (Ambedkar 1997: p263) He relates development of consciousness with the induced field. Buddha creates a question in relation to

the soul, since all the function assigned to the soul are performed by consciousness, a soul without any function is an absurdity. So he disapproved the existence of soul.

The Concept of Nibbana

Nibbana is a Pali word. Etymologically it means departure from craving. In the Fire Sermon Buddha says, "The whole world is in flames. By what fire it is kindled? By what fire of lust, hatred, and delusion; by the fire of birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair it is kindled". (Narada 1988: p492) He maintains that the extinction of these fires is nibbana. Unlike salvation or Moksha of Hinduism, Buddha used altogether other term i.e. nibbana. One can seek Mokhsa after death, but Buddha assures his follower Nibbana within present life only. Therefore, in Buddhist practices, achieving nibbana i.e. enlightenment is the highest goal of any Buddhist. According to Buddha as he mentioned in his very first discourse at Sarnath that attainment of the noble eightfold path means nibbana. According to Prof. Yamakami Sogen, "the realization universal impermanence and non-soul lead to the eradication of manifold causes of samsara, such as illusion, evil, passion, etc., while a correct understanding of the third principle helps in laying the foundation of the fabric of true enlightenment and supreme bliss". (Sogen 2009: p35) explaining Buddha's ideas on nibbana, his chief disciple Sariputta explained it as:

> "Brethren, know you that greed is vile, and vile is resentment. "To shed this greed and this resentment, there is the Middle Way which gives us eyes to see and makes us know, leading us on to peace, insight, enlightenment and Nibbana. "What is this Middle Way? It is naught but the Noble Eight-fold Path of right outlook, right aims, right speech, right action, right means of livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration; this, Almsmen is the Middle Way. (Ambedkar1997: p395)

Commenting on the characteristics of Nibbana, Narada Thera maintains that: "Nibbana, a supermundane state, realized by Buddhas and Arhatas, is declared to be not conditioned by any cause. Hence it is not subject to any becoming, change and dissolution. It is birthless, decayless, and deathless. Strictly speaking nibbana is neither a cause nor an effect. Hence it is unique". (Narada 1988: p500) For Dr. Ambedkar, "Nibbana means enough control over passion so as to enable one to walk on the path of righteousness. It was not intended to mean, anything more. That Nibbana is another name for righteous life is made clear by the Buddha himself to Radha". (Ambedkar 1997: p237)

According to Buddha anybody can attain nibbana in this life, certainly women too. During his life he gave highest value to equality. He didn't discriminate between classes and men and women. In the light of Nibbana, a discussion between Ananda and Buddha on the admission of women in the Sangha is noteworthy here. On initial reluctance of Buddha on the subject, Ananda questioned Buddha if women were not capable of attaining Nibbana? Buddha replied: "Ananda! Do not misunderstand me. I hold that women are as much capable as men in the matter of reaching Nibbana. Ananda! Do not misunderstand me; I am not an upholder of the doctrine of sex inequality." (Ambedkar 1997: p195) This Buddha's view on attainment of Nibbana by women is important here because in the same discussion Ananda mentioned about the discrimination by Brahmins in admitting Shudras and women into parivraja on the grounds of their impurities. Ananda pursue Buddha as: "The Lord knows that the Brahmins hold that the Shudras and women cannot reach moksha (Salvation) because they are unclean and inferior. They therefore do not allow Shudras and women to take Parivraja". (Ambedkar 1997:

p195) Not only at the end of the historical discussion had Buddha admitted women in the Sangha as ordained nuns, but he also taught them his philosophies that equally help them reach the supreme nibbana. There are plenty of references found in Buddhist canon of attainment of nibbana by shudras and women.

Law of Cause and Effect

In Pali it is called as 'Praticca-samuppad' or "the Law of Dependent Origination." Buddha denied the existence of God. He proposed the universal law of cause and effect. The Law of Cause and Effect is the explanation of any happening depending upon its antecedent state. In Visuddha Magga it is maintained:

> "No God no Brahma can be found,
> No matter of this wheel of life,
> Just bare phenomenon roll
> Dependent on Conditionsall!" (Narada 1988: p419)

According to Dr. Ambedkar "Buddha discarded the theory that all deed committed in some former birth have the potency to produce suffering, making present activity impotent. He denied the fatalistic view of Karma." (Ambedkar 1997: p104) According to Buddha one's certain behaviour could be originated of his own good or bad views.

> "Whatsoever individual, brethren, follows perverted views, perverted aim, perverted speech or acts or living, perverted effort, attention, and contemplation: whose knowledge and emancipation are perverted, for him every action of deed, word or thought, performed and achieved according to such perverted views; every willed act, every aspiration, every resolve, all his activities, these things one and all conduce to what is distasteful, unpleasing, repulsive, unprofitable, and painful. And why so Because of his evil view." (Ambedkar 1997: p398)

Here evil view is the cause and one's variety of behavioral patterns is its effects. It is like because of A, arises, B. Similarly when there is no A, arises no B. Buddha emphasizes on the eradication of the causes of sufferings. Through the Law of Cause and Effect, Buddha held ignorance (avijja) as the chief source of all sufferings. He says, "Ignorance is the deep delusion wherein we here so long are circling round", so in Itivuttaka he states, "those who have destroyed delusion and broken through the dense darkness, will wander no more: causality exist no more for them." (Narada 1988: p420) According to Buddha the Law of Cause and Effect is comprised of twelve elements which cause for the dependent arising, as follows:

i. Ignorance give rise to conditioning
ii. Conditioning give rise to consciousness
iii. Consciousness give rise to mind and matter
iv. Mind and matter give rise to senses
v. Senses gives rise to contact
vi. Contact gives rise to feeling
vii. Feeling gives rise to craving
viii. Craving gives rise to attachment
ix. Attachment gives rise to actions
x. Actions gives rise to birth
xi. Birth give rise to
xii. Decay, death, sufferings and grief.

According to Buddha one who destroys ignorance by wisdom could reach the state of nibbana. Therefore, Buddhism held ignorance as the chief source of human suffering. For the complete annihilation of ignorance, Buddha gave the Noble eightfold path to his followers. This very ignorance was understood by Mahatma Phule and Dr. Ambedkar, as to how Dalits in India are suffering in the graded society. Therefore, both the reformers emphasized and advocated education of Dalits in India.

Law of Kamma

In Buddhism, Kamma is the central idea to understand. Kamma is a Pali term which is one's action and Vipaka is its effect. Any kind of intentional action whether mental, verbal or physical is considered as Kamma. Buddha says, "I declare, O Bhikkhus, that volition (cetana) is Kamma, Having willed one act by body, speech and thought". (Narada 1988: p348) Concerning Kamma, Buddha held mind as chief source of Kusala or Akusal Kamma. All our actions and speeches, and thought are coloured by mind or consciousness. Buddha says, "When the mind is unguarded, bodily action is unguarded, speech is also unguarded, thought is also unguarded. When the mind is guarded, bodily action is" guarded, speech also guarded, and thought also is guarded. (Narada 1988: p351)

During the pre-Buddha period Kamma was equally central to existing philosophies and religious entities. But it was then related to the abstract concepts like salvation, life after death and rebirth, etc. Gail Omvedt observes, "Both Samanas and Brahmanas accepted this linkage of karma and rebirth. The Brahamanas extended karma from sacrifice to the necessary rituals and rites of daily life, defined in terms of one's place in the Varna system". (Omvedt 2003: p54) Buddha revolutionized the idea of Kamma in his Dhamma by cutting himself from the existing notions and dogmas around the Kamma. In Buddhism, Buddha brought no concepts like rites and rituals to correct one's Kamma; instead he brought ideas of moral code of conduct to reach the nibbana in the life. "The Buddha interpreted Kamma not in terms of the chain of actions leading to rebirth itself, but in terms of the immediate, psychological, subjective actor in the immediate present. This focus on the concrete acting individual, and especially on the intention of his

action, was a unique contribution of Buddhist thinking." (Omvedt 2003: p56)

Buddha denied the existence of god; therefore, according to him Kamma Niyama maintains the moral order of the universe. "The moral order of the universe may be good or it may be bad. But according to the Buddha the moral order rests on man and on nobody else". (Ambedkar 1997: p243) According to Buddha the effect of one's action is bound to follow it as day followed by night. A person will reap good effects of Kusala Kamma and the other a person will reap the evil effects of Akusal Kamma in this life only. On the consequences of one's action as Kamma Vipaka, Samyukta Nikaya gives clear clarification:

"According to the seed that's sown,
So is the fruit ye reaptherefrom
Doer of good (will gather) good
Doer of evil, evil (reaps)
Sown is the seed, and planted well,
Though shalt enjoy the fruit thereof".
(Narada 1988: p354)

Buddha by giving this idea of Kamma did not think of emancipation of an individual only, his approach was all pervasive to complete living beings, even the harm to environment was condemned by him. He advises: "Do Kusala Kamma so that humanity may benefit by a good moral order which a Kusala Kamma helps to sustain ; do not do Akusala Kamma for humanity will suffer from the bad moral order which an Akusala Kamma will bring about". (Ambedkar 1997: p244)

According to Buddha, an ill effect of one's action certainly affects others too. "Sometimes the action of one affects another instead of the doer. All the same it is the working of the law of Kamma because it either upholds or upsets the moral order." (Ambedkar 1997: p244) The law of

Kamma believed in actions in present life and one can reach supreme bliss of nibbana overcoming his Akusal Kamma in the past. Buddhism brought a ray of hope in the life of people who were struggling to purify their life with good deed. Angulimala, a Robber and believed to be a murdered of one thousand men, became Arhanta following Buddhism as ordained monk. Alavika, the carnivorous man attained the first stage of sainthood. Ambapali, the famous courtesan attained Arhantaship. According to Narada Thera, "these are few striking examples which serve to show how a complete reformation of character can be effected by sheer determination. It may so happen that in some cases a lesser evil may produce its due effects, while the effects of a greater evil may be minimized." (Narada 1988: p383) In this way the doctrine of Kamma that gives consolation, hope, reliance and moral courage to human being.

Ardent support to Human Values

Through the simple teachings Buddha taught human values like, liberty, equality, fraternity and justice which were necessary in the contemporary times of disparity. Buddha became influential because, a common man despite of rank, caste, creed and gender was at the centre of his philosophy. Whether a person is Brahmin the upper caste or a Chandala, the lower caste or a woman of any community, they enjoyed equal treatment and status in the Sangha. Buddha attacked on blind belief in the name of religion, division of people on their rank, many inhuman traditions like sacrifices of animals to please gods, slavery, etc. This was the reason why Dr. Ambedkar embraced Buddhism along with his millions of followers.

Decline of Buddhism in India

It is important here to discuss little about decline of Buddhism because; it was almost non-existent for last 7-8 centuries except in few places like Ladhakh and North East

India. Revival of Buddhism by Dr. Ambedkar, therefore, has got importance. The analysis of Ancient history in India on the grounds of the rise and fall of Buddhism and deterioration of Dalits from a 'Broken Men' to the untouchables seems to go parallel. Dalits and women enjoyed self-respect and dignity when Buddhism was on rise. Buddhism was on rise because it got royal patronage especially during Emperor Asoka and his Mauryan Dynasty by his successors. It was in the year 185 BC, the last Mauryan King Brahadratha was killed by his own Brahmin commander Pushyamitra Shunga. Pushyamitra was hostile towards Buddhism, therefore, during his reign, the patronage to Buddhism was stopped and atrocities towards Buddhists began. The movement in the history was called a counter revolution by Dr. Ambedkar.

Then it was possibly during the Gupta Dynasty in the beginning of 4th century when Dalits were made untouchable and hostility towards Buddhism rose in the country. According to Dr. Ambedkar, as he mentioned in his book *Revolution and Counter Revolution*, Huns who invaded India and Mihirkula established his kingdom in North India, destroyed Buddhist Stupas and monuments. Sasanaka the king of Bengal (sometimes in 606 AD) who was believed to be the follower of Shiva, destroyed *Bodhi Tree* of Bodh Gaya and many Viharas. The record of Chinese traveler Huen Tsang who travelled to India during seventh century mentioned about the lost glory of some Buddhist places like Pataliputra. Other scholars held some internal factors of Buddha Sangha as one of the contributory factor like conflict between Mahayanese and Hinayanese for the cause of its decline.

A major blow occurred to Buddhism that finally overthrew it from its native land, was the Muslim invasion. According to Dr. Ambedkar, they were enemy of "But"

/but/ (means an idol) which was Arabic corruption of word Buddha. The origin of word indicates that they were in assumption that idol worship was identified with Buddhism. Therefore, to destroy idol worship was their mission that destructed Buddhism severely. According to the contemporary Muslim Historians it was a mass slaughter of Buddhist Monks in Buddhist Universities. Survived monks ran away to Nepal and other neighboring countries. Dr. Ambedkar further maintained that from 12th century onwards no Buddhist monk was available to perform rituals in the home of the survived Buddhists. "The paucity of Bhikshus brought about a great change in the composition of the Buddhist priesthood. It was the married clergy with families who were called Aryas that took the place of the Bhikshus proper, and began to cater to the religious needs of the Buddhists generally." (Ambedkar 2008: p235) These temporary priests lacked knowledge of Buddhism who also found no time to undertake deep studies in Buddhism and spiritual development. Ordination of a Buddhist monk is difficult because it required a learned Buddhist master and ability of novice was tested. Such was not the case of a Brahmin priest. Any Brahmin without training could be ordained as a new priest. In this way even after Muslim invaders attack on Brahmins and Buddhists, the former survived and the later perished. Therefore, a tradition of Buddhism of past could not be revived in the following centuries.

Dr. Ambedkar in the same book also indicated that many Buddhists in the North Western region fearing the tyranny of Brahmanism converted to Muslim faith. Dr. Ambedkar held Brahmanism responsible for the decline of Buddhism with the words: "The fall of Buddhism was due to the Buddhist becoming converts to Islam as a way of escaping the tyranny of Brahmanism. The evidence, if it

does not support the conclusion, at least makes it possible. If it has been a disaster, it is disaster for which Brahmanism must thank itself." (Ambedkar 2008: p238)

Part II

Early Movements towards Revival of Buddhism in India

Buddhism is one of the largest religion followed all over the world. It flourished in the country during the Mauran Dynasty and King Kanishka and spread in North East and South Asian countries, few countries in the West also came under the influence of Buddhism. But it remained absent for more than eight centuries in its native land from 12th Century AD. In the second half of the 19th Century British ideologists and scholars of Buddhism started translating Buddhist scripts from Pali and Sanskrit to English. In 1837 an English officer James Prinsep deciphered the Rock Edicts of Emperor Asoka that reveal the breadths and benevolence of the King to the world. Director General of The Archeological Survey of India of British government, Lord Cunningham undertook a massive excavation all over in India. He made Huen Tsangs' records as his torch to discover the wide range of Buddhist pilgrimage in India. These excavations besides the Indus valley brought into light the glory of the Buddhist India of the past.

Towards the end of 19th century, Colonel Olcott of America who was one of the founder members of the Theosophical Society visited Sri Lanka in 1880 and "took refuge in Buddhist faith." (Ryan: 2016). Anagarika Dhammapala formerly named David Hewavitame, joined the Theosophical Society and undertook deep studies in Buddhism. He visited Mahabodhi Vihara in Bodh Gaya, India in 1891. Realising its pathetic condition and control by Brahmins, he initiated a movement of its release from

unlawful possessor. He filed a case in the local court in the same year. Coincidently in the same year Dr. Ambedkar was born. He established Mahabodhi Society in Calcutta with the intention of widespread discussion and scholarly interaction on Buddhism. Pali Studies started from 1892 through The Buddhist Text Society. In the following few years, lower classes of south India showed interest in Buddhism, Iyothee Thass embraced Buddhism from Colonel Olcott and established Sakya Buddhist Society in Madras. Some Buddhist viharas were being built during that period. Professor P. L. Narasu published the most widely read book "*The Essence of Buddhism*" in 1907. During this time, on his success in the Board examination, one of the school teachers of Dr. Ambedkar, Mr. Arjun Keluskar gifted him with a self-authored book on Buddha.

Significant development in the interests of Indian Buddhism during this period of five–six decades brought conducive environment for it. India found its pride back in Buddhism in case of Indian heritage and scholarship. "Buddhist themes entered literature and the arts, chiefly through Tagore in Bengal. A number of Reformers considered themselves Buddhists, although this was not accompanied with a concomitant rejection of Buddhism." (Zelliot 2010: p190) In this way these research and translations helps in bringing back the discussion on Buddhism amongst the intellectuals and scholars in India.

Revival of Buddhism in Central India in 1956

Conversion into the faith of Buddhism in 1956 was not merely an event, but it was the movement initiated by Dr. Ambedkar himself along with Dalits of this nation since 1920s. It was also not just a religious movement, but it was the movement of emancipation of marginalized communities for their self-dignity and all round development of the oncoming generations. Close observation to Dr.

Ambedkar's personal life reveals that his entire mission of life was passing through the different phases towards a gradually cleared goal i.e. to bring about a Prabuddha Bharat (Enlightened India) into reality. It was his Utopia, the safe and prosperous future of his people could be possible through Buddhism only. During his university education in America and England, he researched the root cause of depression of Dalit communities. Through the example of European communities which transformed into a modern society from the graded communities, he got what equality and equal opportunities could bring about a change.

It was his first mission to awaken his people to make them realize the plight of theirs was slavery. He brought massive socio-political and economical emancipation movements in the 1920s. His initial motif was to annihilate Castism from the country which was the real reason of Dalits' degradation to the level of cattle. This motif had never gone off the priority of his mission throughout his life. During the 1930s, it was his radical period, engaged rigorously negotiating with Congress and British Government for the political power sharing to Dalits and massive labour movements. During the 1940s his major role was awaited in transforming India into an Independent Democratic State, fighting for Buddhist India through the Constitution keeping Buddha's idea of Republic society. In the last six years he was composing his people towards the reality of Buddhist India; the journey of Dalit movements under his leadership of last five-six decades saw its pinnacle in the mass conversion into the Buddhist faith in 1956.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar revived Buddhism by converting himself first along with five millions of his Dalit followers in Nagpur on 14th October 1956. Modern Dalit literary outcome has been significantly seen after this particular date. In the democratic air of the independent India the followers

of Buddhism from the Dalit communities has significantly increased within the first decade of the great conversion.

The crooning of Conversion

Conversion by Dr. Ambedkar was not the first as such. In the history a number of examples are scattered in each corner of India where conversion brought a ray of hope to people for the betterment of life of dignity. Many men and women from the low communities became Buddha's disciples and followers and cherished their freedom from the shackles of graded society. In her book *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essay on the Ambedkar Movement,* Eleanor Zelliot maintained that "conversion as a way out of the untouchable status was not new in India. Islam, and more especially Christianity drew large numbers of their Converts from lower castes, and Sikhism in the twentieth century actively encouraged untouchable conversion." (Zelliot 2010: p191) In an online article, Susan Maneck argued that such conversion occurred due to untouchable's dissatisfaction with their status with Hundu society and they want to raise their status by adopting a new identity. (Maneck, 1997) In his book *Revolution and Counter Revolution in Ancient India,* Dr. Ambedkar mentioned about the Buddhists of North West converted to Muslim faith "as a way of escaping from the tyranny of Brahmanism". (Ambedkar 2008: p238) In 1931 a Census Officer's note in Cochin while registering new converted Buddhists is noteworthy here because he found the conversion as "pointed to a new tendency" (Zelliot 2010: p192)

Dr. Ambedkar's Conversion as a Process of Thoughts

It is a well-known fact that on 13th October 1935 Dr. Ambedkar declared at the Yeola Conference that "He was Born as a Hindu, but would not die as Hindu". It was here that he clearly indicated that in near future he was going to

leave his original faith i.e. Hinduism and converting into a new faith. But this thought of conversion came in one of his early speeches in May 1924 in Barshi of District Solapur (Mumbai Regional Bahiskrut Conference). He said that some people thought of leaving nation to escape from untouchability. But it was not possible for all. So, one has to find a way out to annihilate untouchability while living in this country. Conversion was an alternative way. He further maintained that those who had no faith in Hinduism like Muslims and Christians were treated as equals, but untouchable who were followers of Hinduism were treated discriminately. So religion which had no humanism was of no value (to untouchables). It was then no use to stick with the religion which hadn't allowed followers to material as well as spiritual development. He was confident that if people changed their religion, Hindus would treat them equally. So he proclaimed it was better to be a part of larger society and enjoy the prosperity in no time. This speech certainly was indicative of Dr. Ambedkar's beginning determination for the conversion of faith.

His determination was seen confirmed in 1935 at the Yeola Conference. In this speech he warned people while converting into another faith. According to him they had to be ensured with equality, opportunities and self-respect to be guaranteed to them in their new faith. After his pledge that he would not die a Hindu, he advised his followers to stop the Kalaram temple Movement which proved to be fruitless. He concluded with the words that they should built a separate community outside of Hindu fold with the conduct carving out their future worthy of free citizen. It was Mahatma Gandhi who reacted sadly over the resolution passed at the Yeola Conference. He wanted Dr. Ambedkar to reconsider his decision. Next day Dr. Ambedkar reconfirmed his decision to the press reporter over

Gandhiji's reaction. He maintained that he had made up his mind to change his religion. He doesn't care if masses do not come. Itwas for them to decide.

On the grounds of his declaration of conversion, to gain a support to the Conversion Movement, a Conference of Mahars was convened on 30 and 31 May 1936 at Dadar. Dr. Ambedkar's Speech is well known as *"What Way Emancipation,"* the one which is highly referred by intellectual Dalit-Ambedakrite writers, shows its influence on them. In his poetic and mesmerizing speech, he maintained that Hindu religion did not appeal to his reason and to his self-respect. However for Dalits, for spiritual; as well as for material gains the conversion was a must. He claimed man was not for religion, religion was for man. "To become human, convert yourself. To get organised, convert yourself. To achieve strength, convert yourself. To secure equality, convert yourself. To get liberty convert yourself. To make your domestic life happy, convert yourself." (Ambedkar, 2003: p145) Placards with the same message and similar other slogans were displayed everywhere in the Conference place. The entire speech had no mention as to which religion Dr. Ambedkar was inclined to embrace. But in the concluding words he mentioned Buddha's last message to his Sangha from Mahaparinibban Sutta. After summing up Buddha's message, he addressed his people, "I also take refuge in the words of the Buddha. Be your own guide. Take refuge in your own reason. Do not listen to the advice of others. Do not succumb to others. Be truthful. Take refuge in truth. Never surrender to anything. If you keep in mind this message of Lord Buddha at this juncture, I am sure, your decision will not be wrong." (Ambedkar, 2003: p147)

After such intensive meeting on conversion, there was a long pause on the topic. Dr. Ambedkar engaged himself in

building Labour Party in the Legislative elections, then the work of Scheduled Caste Federation, his induction as the Labour Minister in the Viceroy's Cabinet, and his chief role as the Architect of the Constitution of India gave him no space for conversion actively. Though, he continued his studies in Indian as well as World religion with the possibility of choosing one it was reported that he was little inclined to Sikhism and Christianity, but he himself rejected these possibilities in the interest of nation and Dalits in its context. During these years his in-depth research were published one after another. Amongst them *Who were Shudras? Untouchables, Revolution and Counter Revolution, Buddha or Karl Marx and unpublished but completed work The Buddha and his Dhamma* were important towards his ultimate aim of Prabuddha Bharat with Conversion. These researches provided him strong ground to embrace Buddhism as the right alternative for the emancipation of Dalits. Prior to conversion of 1956, it was reported that Dr. Ambedkar took vows in Buddhism along with his wife on May 2 1950 in New Delhi in the Buddhist Monastry of Mahabodhi Society. "The Bharat" published that news the next day. After the above mentioned published books his inclination towards Buddhism was quite clear to his followers.

"The Navyana" with new Philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar's Buddhism

In May 1956 Dr. Ambedkar declared his decision of embracing Buddhism in coming October in Nagpur, Buddha's great supporters Naga's ancient inhabitant. The entire machinery of his supporters and workers geared up for the great occasion. Wamanrao N. Godbole was made secretary of the entire event. On 14th October millions of Dalits and supporters of Dr. Ambedkar gathered in place of Conversion ceremony in Nagpur in white robes. Many of

them already reached Nagpur along with their families and friends a week before to participate in this celebration of the millennium. Bhikshu Chandramani gave three refuge and five Precepts to Dr. Ambedkar and his wife Dr. Savita popularly known as "Maisaheb." Then Dr. Ambedkar gave the same triple refuge and five precepts to the present followers along with additional twenty two Vows as carefully extracted from Buddhism that were clearly distinguishing it from Hinduism. These additional Vows included all the important Values and Code of Moral Conduct to be observed by the new Buddhist. Twenty two Vows administered by Dr. Ambedkar:

1. I shall have no faith in Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh nor shall I worship them.
2. I shall have no faith in Rama and Krishna who are believed to be incarnation of God nor shall I worship them.
3. I shall have no faith in 'Gauri', Ganapati and other gods and goddesses of Hindus nor shall I worship them.
4. I do not believe in the incarnation of God.
5. I do not and shall not believe that Lord Buddha was the incarnation of Vishnu. I believe this to be sheer madness and false propaganda.
6. I shall not perform 'Shraddha' nor shall I give 'pind-dan'.
7. I shall not act in a manner violating the principles and teachings of the Buddha.
8. I shall not allow any ceremonies to be performed by Brahmins.
9. I shall believe in the equality of man.
10. I shall endeavour to establish equality.
11. I shall follow the 'noble eightfold path' of the Buddha.
12. I shall follow the 'paramitas' prescribed by the Buddha.
13. I shall have compassion and loving kindness for all living beings and protect them.
14. I shall not steal.
15. I shall not tell lies.
16. I shall not commit carnal sins.
17. I shall not take intoxicants like liquor, drugs etc.

18. I shall strive to lead my life in conformity with the three principles of Buddhism i.e. Pradnya (Wisdom), Sheel (Character), and Karuna (Compassion)
19. I hereby embrace Buddhism by renouncing my old Hindu religion which is detrimental to the prosperity to the Humankind and discriminate human beings and treat them low.
20. I firmly believe the Dhamma of the Buddha is the Saddhamma.
21. I believe, I am entering the new life.
22. Hereafter I pledge to conduct myself in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha.

These additional Vows administered by Dr. Ambedkar himself are indicative of his redefining Buddhism as "Navyana" to cherish his long wished dream of Buddhist India. Buddhism rejected god, goddesses and their incarnation. 1-5 Vows are indicative of rejection of such illogical faith. Vows 6 and 7 are related to the rejection of rituals claimed in Hinduism for getting salvation. Vow no. 8 rejecting the Brahmana as authority who was responsible for the graded society and degradation of Dalits and women. Vow nos. 9 and 10 based on utter equality stated in Buddhism. Vow no. 11 is the path of Nibbana the supreme goal of any Buddhist. Vow no. 11 Compassion to all creatures supporting the conservation of environment. Vow nos.14 to18 are Moral Code of Conduct. Vow no. 18 is indicative of the three foundation of Buddhist Philosophy. Vow no. 19 is the rejection of Hinduism which was responsible for dehumanising Dalits. Vow nos. 20, 21, and 22 are utter faith in Buddhism and thereof new identity. After the Conversion ceremony was over, a large number of people came forward as ordaining as Buddhist monks to propagate this Navyana of Dr. Ambedkar. Therefore, these Vows are wide spread amongst Buddhists. Now Buddhists and Ambedkarites are held as one in India generally. Therefore, Dalit- Ambedkarite writers automatically reflect

these deeply rooted value based Vows into their writings. Buddhism perceived by Dr. Ambedkar has following merits:

1. "Buddhism demands living existence and a life divine attainable here and now, not after death
2. It is a realism, not idealism
3. It upholds liberty, equality, truth, and justice
4. It is dynamic, scientific and all embracing
5. Its explanations of life, birth and death are clear and logical
6. Man is the centre of its study, nothing outside him" (Pathak 2016: p173)

Buddha's "Rejection" and Dr. Ambedkar's' "Protest"

Buddha was not an activist but he was a crusader against the established dogma and unjust social order in the name of religion. Therefore, on the basis of rationality Buddha rejected God and Goddesses, salvation after death, incarnation, soul, rebirth, etc. Buddha rejected all that was responsible for the degradation of any man and woman of any caste and creed. Buddha peacefully replaced these contemporary religious ideas of established Vedic cult with the new philosophy developed on the basis of reason and logic.

In case of Dr. Ambedkar, he like his master Buddha rejected all that was responsible for the untouchability and dehumanisation of Dalits. From the beginning he realised that the Hindu social order was unjust and irrational. Dalits cannot progress in that setup of society. Therefore, his rejection took shape of protest. His entire socio-political and cultural movements were radically protested. In fact as Gail Omvedt said, Dr. Ambedkar presented a radical Buddha through his *The Buddha and his Dhamma* contrary to its projection in traditional Buddhism. Dr. Ambedkar was a man of modern generation where he knew his demands for human values won't be granted unless he protests and rebel.

Therefore, Dr. Ambedkar initiated extensive movements gathering his people. Rejection was the nature of Buddha's teaching whereas rejection and protest both as the two sides of a coin was the nature of Dr. Ambedkar's approach towards his movements.

Buddha's "rejection" in the contemporary times brought a massive revolution in the understanding of people. Similarly Dr. Ambedkar's "protest" was the real means of bloodless revolution in the influence of his master Buddha. Dr. Ambedkar's *Buddha or Karl Marx* is the reflection of his understanding about the means of revolution which he adopted and followed throughout his life.

Changes in the life of New Converts and the beginning of Dalit Literature

Gail Omvedt called conversion as the beginning of renaissance of Buddhism in the country. It brought massive change in the outlook and behaviour of Dalit communities. Within first decade of conversion a number of Buddhists demographically roused to a high number. It was the time beginning of self-pride of calling oneself Buddhist, a new life. Education was highly spread amongst people that also brought a creamy class settled in bureaucracy. Employability increased due to Dalit youth's aspiration to become like Dr. Ambedkar. Economically Dalit communities were taking a good road towards emancipation. Participation in the governance and politics highly increased. Immediately after Dr. Ambedkar's demise his Party won significant seats in Parliamentary and Legislatures seats. The Constitutional democracy brought many protecting laws which brought security and protection from unjust oppression.

The major development of this renaissance was the development in the cultural wing. The development of literature of protest occurred through the right to express.

The new renaissance in fact brought about psychological development, psyche of inferiority as Dalit untouchable was replaced with the superiority as Buddhist. Current form of art songs, Ambedkarite Jalasas and dramas brought the wave of happiness and appreciation to Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar. Eleanor Zelliot quoted in her book the statements of two Dalit writers accepting the conversion brought "psychological freedom." (Zelliot 2010: p219) for Raja Dhale, a Dalit writer and activist, Conversion was a part of his own identity. According to him, "Buddhism is for all; it is relevant, consistent complete. But if a Buddhist does not himself turn the wheel of Dhamma by his own thought, he becomes an untouchable again." (Zelliot 2010: p219) Commenting upon the conversion of Dalits into Buddhism as Namdeo Dhasal says:

> "Conversion to Buddhism freed the Scheduled castes from mental and psychological enslavement. Religion has an attraction for the common man and it was not easy to change his attitude towards it. The Buddhists have liberated themselves from old ideas of Karma and destiny and from worship of Hindu Gods. To some extent this facilitated their adopting rational attitudes to their conditions in society, the chance of their activity striving to change their conditions for better" (Sharma 2006: p. 68)

Dr. Ambedkar gave Conversion call in 1935, though it was not declared by him as to which religion he was embracing, a large sections of Dalitcommunity started leaving the old religious beliefs. Buddhism was the alternate belief system to Dalits which brought them unity and sense of belonging to each other. Dr. Pradeep Sharma observes: the conversion seems to have helped to create the will to probe every possible means for remaining united and asserting independent society. It also hailed the vision for an alternate society where all people are equal and enjoy a dignified life." (Sharma 2006: p68) Dr. Ambedkar's Dalit

movements prepare the grounds for Dalit Literature and onversion plays a turning point for it. The radical Buddha presented by Dr. Ambedkar itself reflects the Ambedkarism.Buddhism adopted by Dalit creative writers is the same presented by Dr. Ambedkar, because Buddhism was introduced to them by Dr. Ambedkar. Therefore, Dr. Yashvant Manohar called him one of the trisharana (three refuges) of Dalit Literature; other two are Buddha and Phule. According to Manohar, the panchasila of Dalit Literature are:

1. "Complete faithfulness to Ambedkarite Dhamma
2. The consciousness shaped by the awareness of revolution and counter revolution
3. Fearless self-manifestation of a revolutionary personality
4. Creation and appreciation of literature, and
5. Creation of literature of commitment for Dhammajeevan" (Pathak 2006: PP 179-180)

Dalit writers found ultimate faith in Dr. Ambedkar and Buddhism like every other Buddhist. Therefore, when they take Vows: "Natthi me saranamannam Buddho me saranamvaram, Etena saccavajjenavaddheyyamsatthu-sasane (For me there is no other refuge, the Buddha is my excellent refuge. By the utterance of this truth, may I grow in the Master's Way?)", they automatically take refuge in Dr. Ambedkar's thought and philosophy.

In a nutshell, Pre-Buddha socio-religious and cultural background offers causes and inevitable conditions for the rise of Buddhism. The two streams of philosophical schools i.e. Astikas and Nastikas give rise to the Philosophical thoughts in the Indian culture as a whole. The pre-Buddhist condition of slaves, the broken men, and women was deteriorated which was assured dignity and self-respect by the new rationalistic schools. Therefore, values and morality taught by Buddha and Mahavira appealed to contemporary masses.

Vedas accepted the concepts of soul, rebirth and moksha and also concept of graded society. Samkhya is orthodox school of Vedism believes in satkaryavada. Another group of Samanas were engaged in finding solutions to abstract questions about life and death. The rise of such asceticism brought a parallel culture in the Vedic period. Ajivika and Charvaka also brought a rationalistic approach. Mahavira's doctrines were also formulated as reaction to and rejection of Brahmanism. Jainism accepted the existence of gods in the universe, but they reject their control over the universe. Jainism gives ethics and morality in life as supreme important to keep oneself pure.

Siddhartha Gautama was the prince of Sakya State who renounced his family life on his disagreement with Gana Sangha for war with neighbouring state over distribution of water for agricultural purpose. Later he got enlightenment under Peepal tree in Gaya. By establishing his Sangha he preached his Dhamma and philosophy to all strata of men. His philosophy revolves round the liberation of man so he kept man at the centre of his philosophy. Buddhism was developed on the basis of rationalism; therefore, there is no place to imaginary god and superstitions. Buddhism declined from the fourth centuries onwards. In the beginning of 19th century British scholars brought back the discussion on Buddhism. Archaeological excavation and historical studies created the platform for the redevelopment in the country. Colonel Olcott's and Anagarika Dhammapala's initial works brought a momentum in connecting people with the historical Buddha.

It was at the same time social awakening movements were initiated by Mahatma Phule and later by Dr. Ambedkar. The mass conversion of 1956 of these Dalits into indigenous Buddhism under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar brought a new socio-cultural revolution. The

Dalit creative writers who emerged from 1960s in Maharashtra from these communities prominently accepted these vows and Dr. Ambedkar's Buddhism.

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Three

Dalit Poetry and Buddhism

Roots of Dalit Poetry in the Recent Past

Poetry is the highly loved genres of Dalit Literature. It has its roots in folk songs of the Dalit communities in the country and especially Mahar community of Maharashtra. Folk singers and *Shahirs* of Maharashtra who participated in the Dalit movement initiated by Dr. Ambedkar from 1920s significantly brought a Dalit Consciousness and rejection as its nature into their poetry. Although these were inspirational songs, Dalit poetry took its shape after Conversion in 1956 from the college magazines of Milind Mahavidyala, Aurangabad and Siddhartha Mahavidyalaya, Mumbai, both founded by Dr. Ambedkar. It has developed a great deal and turned into a fertile tradition within short span of time. Dalit poetry which began in Marathi first spread like a wild fire in other Indian languages rapidly from the late 1970s. Wherever it travelled, it enriched the literature of that language, as if that literature was incomplete before without Dalit poetry. It not only revolutionized the nature of poetry in that language it also through its intention and composition rebelled against the traditional poetry.

Roots of Dalit Poetic Voices in Buddhism

Religion plays a vital role in influencing people's lives and their creativity. As Christianity has a great impact on English literature, Dalit literature has also come under great influence of Buddhism as its base. Human values and Dhamma taught by Buddha brought significant changes in

people's social and personal life. The art, architecture and culture in the following centuries were highly influenced by Buddhism. The literary creativity and development was the product of Buddha's Sangha who was engaged in teaching masses the way of life and helping them in annihilating their sorrows. Poetic composition during the time of Buddha was the medium of composing Dhamma thoughts adopted by *Theras and Theris*. Their gathas i.e. poetic compositions were at the same time creative composition of their inner thoughts. These gathas were their responses to the life from being to becoming. How Dhamma brought significant change in their personal life was the chief concern of these gathas. Many of the composers of these gathas were from the lower communities i.e. today's Dalits. On Therigatha in general, Charles Hallisey states:

> "The *Therigatha* is an anthology of poems composed by some of the first Buddhists; while the poems of *Therigatha* are clearly nowhere near as old as the poetry of the Rig Veda, for example, they are still some of the first poetry of India; the *Therigatha's* poems are some of the first poems by women in India; as a collection, the *Therigatha* is the first anthology of women's literature in the world." (Hallisey 2015: p7)

These people were living life of indignity and dehumanised state as treated by the higher communities. Dalits rose to the level of nibbana after entering egalitarian environ of the Sangha. Therefore, self-revelation which is the chief element of poetry found its roots in Buddhist Monks and Nuns in 600-500 BC. This oral tradition of Pali language was handed down to Buddhist scholar Ashvaghosha (C.80- C.150) who composed epic biography of Buddha "*Buddhacaritam*" in classical Sanskrit. He composed his poetry prior to Kalidasa. In the seventh century AD, works of Sarhapa, the exponent of Siddha School i.e. Tantrayana, brought new literary compositions. Through his work "he opposed the inequality based

discriminatory, touchability, high and low based aspect of interaction of Brahmana social system and its practices and its values and he supported the fundamental humanism." (Vishwambharnath 2004: p7) His poetry is the record of transition of poetic language from classical Sanskrit to again local dialects, i.e. *"Apabhransha".* He brought out *Doha* and *pada* as the poetic composition forms which were immediately adopted by the Indian Saints of Bhaki tradition. Sarhapa is also known as the Adikavi of Hindi. Bhakti tradition under Kabir, Raidas, Tukaram, Chokhamela and many more saints in every region guided people through their poetry and works of awakening. These saints adopted Sarhapa's style, poetic compositions and forms Doha and pada. The folk songs attached to the cultural tradition of various communities, especially lower communities brought forward the tradition of Shahiri, Bharud, Jalasa, and Tamasha that are directly responsible for lyrical composition in the recent past.

Contemporary Dalit Poetry: Protest, Science and Universality

Besides college magazines, Dalit poetry with the opening anthologies like Namdeo Dhasal's *Golpitha*, Keshav Meshram's *Utkhanan*, Trambak Sapkale's *Surung*, Waman Nimbalkar's *GaoKusabaheril Kavita*, Daya Pawar's *Kondawada*, Yashwant Manohar's *Utthangumpha*, etc. brought a storm in the Marathi literary world with the images of protest, rejection of religious dogma which was controlling the lives of poor people with man to man discrimination, images of utter poverty, terrible hunger and yet struggle of Dalits for self-identity and dignity of life. With these poems, Dalit poetry acquired the attitude of rebel against unjust traditions and mainstream literature which supports the unjust social gradation in the name of religion. Dalit poets come from Dalit ghettos, rural background, and filthy slums

therefore, the language of Dalit poetry carries the unsophisticated language which is in real the lingua-franca of these marginalised people. Dalits received abuse and bitterness from the upper class Hindus from time to time so the language they use normally flavoured with those abuses, naturally takes its way into their poetry. "Dalit poetry is an expression of suppressed and oppressed mind of Dalit community and hence its language is different, distorted and full of verbal dexterity." (Nimbalkar 2006: p69)

Since Dalit literature takes its inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar and Buddha its foundation is built with the human values of liberty, equality, fraternity, compassion and justice. These values and belief in life made Dalit poetry unique. The beauty of Dalit poetry lies in truthful narration of life and sufferings of Dalits in ghettos, its nature of rejection and protest and constant touch with values. "It is in respect of values that Dalit poetry forges ahead of modern poetry." (Nimbalkar 2006: p70) Dalit literature brought a real world of bitter experiences replacing the life of imagination of mainstream literature. The rejection of caste system with protest through literature shakes the Indian mind. Therefore, Dalit literature's contribution to the Indian literature is immense. "Indian society, with its history of oppression of Dalits, often fails to recognise the Dalits' contribution to the repository of Indian literature through their distinctive criticism of the inhuman social system." (Paul 2012: p60)

The aim of Dalit poetry is to bring social harmony by establishing casteless society. It also aims at the freedom of Dalits from the slavery of caste system. Prof. Jadhav observes: "Dalit literature was born out of the womb of freedom. Intense emotions, deeper consciousness takes its way out from poetry first as always. Can there be any other intense emotion than the emotion of freedom? When Dalit

realised their slavery from the remote past, a logical thought to hope of annihilating that slavery got its expression through poetry." (Meshram 1998: p74)

Poetry in general works as cathartic to the poet as well as to readers. Function of Dalit poetry is the same in addition to pacify the furious emotions of the writer. Dalit poetry does not provoke Dalits for bloody revolution. The chief reason behind this is that Buddhism is at its base. On the one hand Dalit poetry expresses agony and pain of a Dalit, it exposes the unjust caste system in India, and on the other hand it appeals to every citizen for acceptance of social values and principle of Metta and Compassion taught by Buddha. "It appears prosaic and positive because of the searing life experiences depicted in it." (Nimbalkar 2006: p70)

Noted critic, writer and founder of "Asmitadarsh" Dr. Gangadhar Pantawne found that Dalit Sahitya has its foundation in Ambedkarism and Buddhism. He has no doubt in claiming that "today's Dalit Sahitya will be transformed into literature of Buddhist consciousness." (Pantawne 2008: p20) Because it is the expression of human values preached by Buddha, therefore, he found three essential principles of today's Dalit Literature viz. Protest, Science (rationality) and Universality. Dalit poetry reflects these principles forcefully.

Sarcasm in Dalit Poetry as a sharp weapon

Dalit poetry portrays the life of Dalit and their suffering. Images of the life in the poetry come one after another, so poetry runs into many stanzas. In the present time writers use few lines and with the help of sarcasm, irony and humour they attack their opponents. In the previous phase upper caste men and Hindu hegemony were their opponents. But in the recent times, Dalit writers do not

spare the creamy layer of men from within the Dalit communities itself who keep themselves away from their own roots. There are many changes that could be seen and observed in Dalit poetry. Great Dalit poets like Namdeo Dhasal use sarcasm as a weapon against Hindu hegemony and casteism. Loknath Yashwant in recent times modified sarcasm in his poetry at different level.

Poet from the ages has been attacking on the wrong culture, injustice, ill-manner, wrong political decisions, atrocities against weaker sections and injustice that prevailed in the society. A hard and severe verbal attack through sarcasm and irony in poetry always serves a kind of purpose for poets. It has a relation with our day to day way of conversation. Poets in the present age pick up language from daily life situations. Being sarcastic towards something or somebody who turned to be wrong toward one is a normal reaction. When one uses sarcastic remarks on the other, it is simply to make him realize mistakes he/ she committed. Correcting others is also an aspect of being sarcastic.

Buddhism to Dalit Poets

As has been pointed out by Eleanor Zelliot, Dalit Literature has its roots in the Dalit Movement especially the Mahar Community along with other marginalised communities of Maharashtra which embraced Buddhism along with Dr. Ambedkar. Buddhism became the way of life to all of them which was already crooning since Dr. Ambedkar's declaration of leaving Hinduism in 1935. The Twenty two Vows adopted by neo-Buddhists on that occasion administered by Dr. Ambedkar are extracted from the teachings of Buddha itself. Therefore, Dalits who were oppressed for centuries naturally implemented new values to their lives immediately to annihilate the physical as well as mental slavery. The Buddhism brought forward by Dr.

Ambedkar as Navayana through his Book *The Buddha and His Dhamma* on the line of *The Bible* and *The Quran* presents a rational Buddhism. According to his advice, Buddha or Karl Marx and The Revolution and Counter Revolution were taken as the supplementary books to understand his Buddhism. The intellectual Ambedkarite adopted this Buddhism of Rationality and Science. Taking inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar's historical study became the passion of Dalit intellectuals. India in time of Asoka and Kanishka brought Buddhist Socialism into practice as a State religion. Therefore, making present India the Prabuddha Bharat (enlightened India) as a dream of Dr. Ambedkar as well becomes the aim of Dalit writers. The values and morality taught by Buddha now started inculcating in the day to day practice of Buddhists which certainly reflects through their creative literature.

For Waman Nimbalkar Dalit literature is the literature of Buddhist Philosophy, because "morality raises the stature of a man. It preaches him to live on the plane of equality. It grants him freedom and opens the doors of justice for him. It establishes fraternity among human beings. Thus it is a thought of social consciousness. Dalit literature appears with the acceptance of these values of life and consciousness." (Nimbalkar 2006: pp41-42) On the other hand for Dr. Gangadhar Pantawne, Buddhist Philosophy is the Philosophy of Revolution. Buddhist Literature has got new meaning and dimensions through Dr. Ambedkar's Buddhism. He further maintains in his article *Learning Planes of Buddhist Literature*, without Dr. Ambedkar, Dalits would have not understood Buddha and his science and protest. Therefore, nobody should see Buddhist Literature as a communal literature, rather its rationality and science has to be accepted. Baburao Bagul in his answer to Eleanor Zelliot says that "Conversion set the untouchable free to be

Creative." (Zelliot 2001: p299) The impression of Buddhist Conversion on Dalits could be realised through the comments of Eleanor Zelliot:

> "Today's Buddhists are both literate and highly educated, they are village labourers and professors in universities, their social class varies enormously, but they are bound together by a common belief that the Buddhist Conversion has freed them, and that the way taught them by Bhimrao Ambedkar is the only way for them to possess full human right, human dignity, and pride in what they are." (Zelliot 2001: pp260-261)

Pre-conversion Dalit Literature was the Movement Literature. Folk songs and poems were in abundance towards the achievement of social equality. Reference of Dr. Ambedkar and Buddha occur as praise to their work towards human cause. Traditional singers like Waman Kardak brought Ambedkari Jalasa to new heights. After Conversion, Buddhism seems to be more internalised in the life of Dalits therefore, it reflects frequently in their literature. "Buddhist references are to be found increasingly in the poetry as that identity is more and more thoroughly internalizes." (Zelliot 2001: p12)

Taking inspiration from the movement of Dr. Ambedkar, a new tradition of Buddhist monks came forward and revived the Buddha Sangha in India. These monks preach Buddhism of Dr. Ambedkar, naturally setting a ground for rationality and logical beliefs that have been developed in the country, particularly in Maharashtra. The works of these monks as unpaid teachers and social workers helped Dalit Literature for preparing its base. Inspirational songs, Poetry recitation is an essential feature of Ambedkar and Buddha's birth anniversaries and other days of observation in the Buddhist Monasteries of India, it accelerates the Dalit Poetry Movement during the last few years.

Tenets of Buddhism for Study and Analysis of Dalit Poetry

Neo- Buddhists embraced Buddhism at the hands of Dr. Ambedkar and the "Navayana" proclaimed by him was adopted by all the Dalits into their daily practices is reflected into their literary creation. Ambedkarite Buddhists follow Buddhism while keeping Dr. Ambedkar's *The Buddha and His Dhamma* as the basic guide. Buddhism practiced by Mahayana and Hinayana, is not adopted as the same as mentioned in the Book. The book is the in-depth research of Dr. Ambedkar, who extracted Buddhism of rationality and beyond any influences of Hinduism. Therefore, keeping Twenty two Vows were given by him and Buddhism discussed in *The Buddha and His Dhamma* taken as the principles to be applied on selected Dalit writings for the present work. They are as follows:

- Four Noble truths : Existence of suffering and its annihilation
- Realization of Suffering
- Causes of Suffering
- Law of Cause and Effect
- Noble eightfold Path with three main categories Wisdom, Moral conduct and Samadhi
- Rejection of God, its incarnation and No beliefs in rituals and Varnashram Dharma
- Three Principles of Buddhism: Anicca, Anatta and Nibbana
- Law of Kamma
- Five Precepts and its outcome with Compassion, Metta and love and Equanimity
- Human Values like Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, Justice, etc.
- Buddhist Culture and Symbols

These elements have been studied from selected translated Dalit Poetry to establish the influence of Buddhist Philosophy. Applicable elements also have been chosen for the application based study in Dalit Poetry. A literary critical method of analysis has been used.

Primary Sources and Writers for study

For this chapter, the present research study includes translated Dalit Poetry into English, Poisoned Bread edited by Arjun Dangle, an Anthology of Dalit Literature edited by Mulk Raj Anand and Eleanor Zelliot, anthology of Namdeo Dhasal's poems translated by Dilip Chitre " A Current of Blood", Red Slogans on Green Grass translated by Aparna Lanjewar Bose, poetry in From Untouchable to Dalit by Eleanor Zelliot, Dalit Women Poets of Vidarbha by Dr. P. Chukerbutty and some more translated poetry published in various magazines. The need based free translation of Marathi Dalit Poetry into English has been undertaken here at some places for analysis.

On the basis of Dalit Poetry translated into English so far, this study proposes to undertake poetry of six poets of first generation Dalit writers:

1. **Keshav Meshram (1937-2007),** a Professor of Marathi, a poet and novelist known for his anthology of poetry *"Utkhana*" , Novel "*Jatayu*" and autobiography "*Hakikat"*
2. **Namdeo Dahasal (1949-2014)**, a staunch Ambedkarite activist poet known for his stormy anthology of poems *"Golpitha", "Tuhi Iyatta Kanchi" "Khel", "Murkha Mansane Dongar halvile*" *"Yasattet Jiv Ramat Nahi"*, "*Mi Marale Suryachya Rathache Sat Ghode"* and *"Gandu Bagicha",* etc. he was the recipient of Padmashree Award and Sahitya Academy's Life time achievement award.

3. **Waman Nimbalkar (1943-2010),** a Marathi Dalit poet and critic known for his anthology of poems *"Gav Kusabaheril kavita"* and *" Vahatya Jakhamancha Pradesh"*
4. **Daya Pawar (1935-1996),** a Dalit poet and critic, awardee of Padmashree known for his autobiography *"Baluta"* and anthology of poems " *Kondawada"*
5. **Yashwant Manohar (1943),** A retired Professor of Marathi from RTM Nagpur University, a poet, thinker and critic known for his anthology of poems *"Utthangumpha", " Murtibhanjan" and " Kavyabhimayan*". He wrote dozens of books on aesthetics and Ambedkarism in Marathi.
6. **Jyoti Lanjewar (1950-2013),** is a poet, critic and feminist activist. Retired as the Professor of Marathi from a local college of Nagpur. Her daughter Dr. Aparna Lanjewar Bose translated her poetry into English entitled " *Red Slogans on Green Grass*"

Dukkha i.e. suffering as the Noble truth

Suffering in human life is the noble truth founded by Buddha. He took it as the "problem" to solve. In the first sermon known as "Dhammachakka pavattana" delivered to the first five disciples in Saranath, he claimed that human life is full of sufferings and pain. He further maintained that the suffering has a cause to it. Besides natural sufferings caused out of death, diseases, old age, etc., suffering and pain could come out of insult, discrimination and oppression at the same time. Such kind of suffering was known to the contemporary times, therefore, many women and men from lower strata of communities joined Buddha Sangha to gain status and respect.

Present day Dalits are living in utter poverty and homeless conditions in a much uprooted conditions in the society. Dalits sufferings are generated out of injustice

towards them in the name of religion and graded society framework. Their ignorance towards their rights to live with dignity is an added factor to their dehumanized status. The images of sufferings are terribly presented in Dalit Poetry. Images of hunger, pain, insults, poverty, marginality, oppression, etc. brought dukkha to them. Dalit poetry opens the world of dukkha of Dalits to the readership which was previously imagined only by mainstream writers. A fact from the life of Namdeo Dhasal is noteworthy here when he took Dilip Chitre to the Golpitha, a red light district of Mumbai to realise the pain and sufferings of Dalits and women in prostitution. Dilip Chitre narrated this incidence in "*A Current of Blood*" translated poetry of Dhasal. The inhuman conditions of Dalits as sufferings was picked up by Dalit poets and forcefully presented them in their poetry with pinching and sharp vocabulary.

In *Allahu Akbar,* Dhasal gives way to his emotion on the human suffering that made him weep. He at least wants equality to be maintained for the departed ones as a tribute to them.

"Sparrows of darkness clustered on the eyes are flying away
I see the legs of homeless urchins in the graveyard
Let's filter out the shia and sunnidargas inside ourselves
Let's weep upon every grave
Allahu Akbar." (Dhasal 2007: p26)

In his poem "*On the Way to the Durgah"* he gives picture of a newly born baby who was orphaned in the rags and tied with the lifelong suffering

"The leaking sun
Went out
In the embrace of the night
When I was born
On the pavement
In the rags

An instant orphan..." (Anand 1992: p72)

Dhasal has realisation of the darkness of the poverty where Dalits live. This darkness is the real suffering to them, but they take it as their own piece of land, at least they claim it. In the poem *Poverty as my own Independent Piece of land,* the opening lines are indicative of darkness and poverty:

"Destiny willing, the form may change or may not
Even then poverty itself is my own independent piece of land." (Anand 1992: p73)

The picture of poverty and filth of Dalit ghettos portrayed by Keshav Meshram in his poem *In Our Colony* expresses the suffering of Dalits. The message of granny's death adds to the suffering in the situation:

"Our houses stand
Like footprints of cattle in the mud
...
The postman frustrated in searching Ranu Narayan
Surrounded by naked guides
Groaning in agony as though hit on the knee
He keeps on wandering mutely in search of Ranu Narayan
Bending and moving through mud and marsh
Sweating in clumsy livery.
The search is over.
'Ranu's granny has expired." (Dangle, 2009: pp13-14)

His poem *One day I cursed that Mother fucker God* the suffering of Dalits through the injustice in the social system which made the Dalit socio-economically low got its expression in sarcasm:

"Would you chop a whole cart of wood
For a single piece of bread?
Would you wipe the sweat from your bony body
With your mother's ragged sari?
Would you wear out your brothers and sisters
For your father's fix?

Would you work as a pimp
To keep him booze?" (Anand 1992: p118)

In the poem *Mother* by Waman Nimbalkar, the images of suffering are yet intense and terrible. It also records the death of the mother by snake bite as an irreparable loss and state of helplessness to the poet:

"Just as the day sank down and the dark's kingdom came
We would sit at the door with no light in the hut
...
In our stomachs all was darkness.
...
Mother came, foot wrapped, blood flowing down.
A huge black snake had bitten her, two women said.
...
Our wailing broke out, became thin in the air
Mother had gone, leaving her children in the wind."
(Anand 1992: pp121-122)

Daya Pawar brings the picture of poverty and sufferings of Dalits in one of the suburban of Mumbai in his poem *Siddhartha Nagar*:

"O Siddhartha!
The shantytown named after you
In this twentieth century
Has been struck by the tyrannical plough of power.
Each hut
Is uprooted like a worthless stone.
A police van was driven
Right over the signboard which carried your name.
Clothing in rags, the mats used as beds-
These huge earnings of umpteen generations-
Scattered by police clubs.
A bunch of naked little children
Screaming and moaning, came onto the roads."
(Anand 1992: p 136)

The shantytown which was the colony of poor Dalits was crushed by rich builders for erecting huge complexes as if

their lives were worthless. The favour of police to the tyrannical system has been exposed in the poem beside the images of poverty and suffering is highly intense.

Jyoti Lanjewar in her poem *Had I died in the womb*brought her inner pain over the institutionalization of slavery which crushed the self-respect of the Dalits:

"My friend...
I am though with living
Had I died in the womb
In the tetrad of these infelicitous ages
Why would sorrow scarcity slavery
Adhere to me like a beautiful picture."(Lanjewar 2008: p78)

In *My Poetry* Jyoti Lanjewar portrays the images of poverty as dukkha and expresses her wish assigned to her poetry:

"My poetry is in the quest of soul
Hid in semi clad tattered shreds
Sitting beneath the iron metal bridge
And his empty bowl hungrily licked
Of fragments and left-overs."(Lanjewar 2008: p78)

Yashwant Manohar in his poem *Maruti Kamble* expresses the helplessness of Dalits who were living life under the darkness:

"Maruti Kamble! You were not living in the dwellings of darkness here ever
Then they would have killed you was not possible
Are god theirs, sky theirs, direction and land is theirs
They bought everything; they would not give you light."
(Manohar 2001: P 66)

In another poem *Furious Red Sea* Manohar portrays the metaphor of poverty in his typical style:

"In the terrible flood of death
A Broken winged bird struggling to fly helplessly
By consuming dried leaves

Painful trees displaced churning.
Darkness as the cursed to life
Ready to Drag dried rivers." (Manohar 2001: P6)

Suffering to human in general is because of natural causes, and Dalits are no exceptions to it. But Dalits sufferings besides these causes are mainly originating out of the gradation of the society and poverty as the child of the Varna system. Dalit poets through their poetry are trying to expose these subtle references.

Suffering out of Ignorance i.e. Avijja and theory of Cause and Effect

According to Buddha avijja i.e. ignorance is the chief source of dukkha i.e. suffering to human being. The present Dalits who had broken away from the village in the late Neolithic period and came to the periphery as defeated tribe continued to dwell at the boundary. These broken men further imposed with untouchability and Dalitness under Brahmanism. Dalits have forgotten their past remain in the ignorance and accepted their plight as a matter of fate and curse of last life. Dalits suffering directly came from Casteism and oppression but at the same time ignorance of the past continued their suffering ages after ages. Present day Dalit intellectuals through Dr. Ambedkar and tradition of awakening became aware of the real reasons of their slavery. The avijja of Dalits is the cause of their terrible poverty and further degradation to the dehumanised state since no protest by them was its (avijja's) effects. Therefore, present day Dalits protested by annihilating their avijja and developed wisdom. The references of avijja as a source of sufferings are in abundance in Dalit poetry:

In the poem "So that my mother may be Convinced..." Namdeo Dhasal expresses the ignorance of his mother as woman and as a shudra about her plight and causes for sufferings:

"A body broken down for seven generations
Gentle mother, your feet haven't travelled through the ten continents
You never, never, never could leave your village world.
...
In your prime, you became weak, naïve, a tethered cow.
Mother you never understood
This land does not value the women, the Shudra, the
Worker, the landless." (Anand 1992: p60)

In another poem which is dedicated to one sex worker of *Golpitha* named Mandakini Patil, Dhasal gives way to his feeling for her and being a Dalit his relatedness and empathy to the suffering of that girl is intense. The girl who submitted to poverty and Dalitness engaged in the flesh trade as a commodity. It was her ignorance to the fact that it will bring her more and more sufferings, lost her womanhood and dignity for quenching hunger. Dhasal wants to awaken her to the life through a poem:

"On a barren blue canvas
Her clothes ripped off, her thigh blasted open,
A sixteen year old girl surrendering herself to pain.
And a pig: its snout full of blood." (Dhasal 2007: p29)

Dhasal further enters the mind of that girl and brings out the emotion of fear and disgust which she suffers every day. People search love and lust, but the girl behind her mortal body digests innate suffering of the indignity bereaved of happiness for forever. The effects of entering into this profession are terrible. The writer found the situation and his reaction to the girls' plight as nothingness:

"The face that seems attractive is not really a face:
Behind it lies the bitter reality of skill, the ordinary truth.
When someone's flesh is ripped out
To what terminal do the parts of the skeleton lead you?
In the backyard of love, all you find is fruits of fear and disgust.
An infinite and sovereign nothingness stalks us all."

(Dhasal 2007: p29)

In Daya Pawar's poem "*Four Poems: 2. Oh! Great Poet*" is written on the writer of Ramayana, poet Valmiki who according to poet had led the life of ignorance. Valmiki was believed to be born in a shudra family; instead of protesting for his community's plight his epic work supported the oppressors only. The Poet is complaining against Valmiki who did not give voice to the Dalits of his community at the same time:

"You were born outside the village
In a shunned neighbourhood...where misery itself was
Born,
Never festooned with fruit or flower...
The dejected faces...furrowed with care...
It is true never heard
Their lament as they cried for liberation?" (Anand 1992: p132)

In another poem "*Blood-Wave*" Daya Pawar narrates the toil of old generations, how Dalits would serve the village, but in return turned into mud and worthless in the society:

"As our generations grown bull-strong, bull-humped
Pulling the village like a cart,
Became lifeless lumps worth mud" (Dangle 2009: p72)

Darkness is the metaphor of ignorance. Jyoti Lajewar in her poem "*Even before the Moon can be Clenched*" expresses how ignorance of Dalits ended them in the darkness of poverty and unjust social situations:

"Darkened men
Living on darkness
Gulped from the surroundings
Ultimately merged in darkness" (Lanjewar 2008: p83)

In the poem *I am of theirs directions,* Yashwant Manohar portrays the sufferings of people because of superstitions, illogical beliefs and traditions:

"Jaundiced thoughts of this land
Decomposed are turns, roads, and squares
Decomposed sunlight in every houses
Diseased groups here
And institutions following their creators
Humanity made Diseased here
Diseased behaviours of the flowing winds here
And immoral control of temples always
Where to hide face
How to pay one's effects of protests
Wherever go follows the life like shadow
How to delete close to heart houses from us
On the back of coming every day
Rests the killer history which makes me insulted"
(Manohar 2009: p46)

Dalit Literature gives a high respect to the life of dignity and self-respect. Therefore, realisation of their plight in the graded and unequal social system help them annihilate their ignorance i.e. avijja which was the reason for their sufferings. By embracing Buddhism in 1956, the mental slavery under religious constraint was ceased.

The Noble Eightfold Path in Dalit poetry

The Noble Eightfold Path was given by Buddha as the attainment of Enlightenment. The eight part of this path is broadly divided into three major groups. They are Wisdom, Moral Code of Conduct and Contemplation. After knowing one's suffering and its causes, man then starts practicing the noble path to reach life's goal of enlightenment. Dalits who are discriminated and suffer injustice at the hand of Brahmanism want to liberate first. The happiness and life of respect in society is the goal of a Dalit. Thus Enlightenment

for him is to bring his community liberation from all sorrows and insults.

Wisdom in Dalit Poetry (Panna)

The Wisdom is composition of three elements viz. right view, right endeavour, and right thought. Dalit writers are inspired by Dr. Ambedkar and Buddha to bring happiness and life of dignity to the marginalized people of the country. Therefore, the literature of oppressed develops Wisdom as taught by Buddha. It is inculcated in the day to day practice of their community as well as in personal life, therefore, it naturally reflects through Dalit Literature.

In his poem *"Now, Now"* Namdeo Dhasal expresses his intension of leaving ignorance. He knew that the ignorance of his father made him suffer like his the fellow brothers. By knowing the causes of the avijja, he developed Wisdom as a poet:

"Turning their backs to the sun, they journeyed through centuries;
Now, now we must refuse to be pilgrims of darkness.
That one, our father, is bent from carrying
Carrying and darkness. Now, now we must lift that
Burden from his back" (Anand 1992: p53)

In the poem, *So that my Mother may be convinced...*Dhasal brings the image of an awakened Dalit. Through Dr. Ambedkar's Movement, a Dalit became rational and developed capacity to overthrow ignorance which was forced upon him by the unjust social system:

"Mother, your son is not a child.
He is son of this age's rebellion.
He can see clearly the injustice, himself as victim.
Governmental machinery, means of living, power of toll,
Mines of coal steel, warehouses, factories,
There; protection, guarantee of food and money.
My face, lying in the dust, separated from all of this."
(Anand 1992: p61)

Jyoti Lanjewar was convinced that oppressors won't change their method of injustice. Therefore, she suggests that one must be human to help other overcome from psychological slavery. With the knowledge of oppressors hostility, she and her community has to find a way of their own. This very thought of right vision develops Wisdom in her poem *The Nameless one*:

"For the sake of poetry of humanity
One must be so very human
But they change direction with the wind...
And these green parrots of the dry desert turn out to be a mirage.
They turn their eyes where they wish, according to their own convenience." (Anand 1992: p105)

In another poem "Life Long Kinship" Jyoti Lanjewar claims that now Dalits have got Wisdom. With the realization of the causes of the suffering, they are ready to fight with the unjust system:

"I am the living allegory
Of the annihilating sun
That burns all darkness
To rise
...
I will smoulder the mettle flames
And when the hamlets burn
I will lend torches in every hand" (Lanjewar 2008: p29)

Sarcasm is the sharp weapon used in Dalit poetry. Keshav Meshram refers to the People who conduct high level research in universities without worries and debate on the issue of people in his poem "One day I cursed Mother-fucker God". Writer's insight is noteworthy when he differentiates between theoretical thoughts and practical realities. This differentiation comes from Wisdom:

"The universities buildings shuddered and sank waist- deep
All at once, scholars began doing research

Into what makes people angry
They sat in their big rooms fragrant with incense,
Their bellies full of food
And debating" (Anand 1992: p117)

In his poem *I Demanded*, Yashwant Manohar expresses his wish for his life which is indicative of his right vision and right thought:

"My heart demanded a sight without hate
And utter trust not removed of man
After four darkened nights, expects four days my
Left uprooted life
Demanded freedom like a stream and fearless songs for my voice
I demanded realisation of culture of equality for this land
Demanded infinite wealth of wings
And to fly healthy sky without belief in soul."
(Manohar 2001: p 58)

Dalit poetry significantly shows its awareness about right vision and right thought taught by Buddha. Dr. Ambedkar's Movement and his speeches help Dalit writers inculcate the rational philosophy of Buddhism.

The Moral Code of Conducts (Shila) and Law of Kamma

The Moral Code of Conducts has unparalleled importance in Buddhism. Observance of the Five Precepts and other related ethics is the way of life to any Buddhist. The base of purity of life, which helps in developing Bodhi mind, is none other than these moral codes. Ambedkarite communities that come under the influence of Buddhism inculcated these Codes in their day to day life easily and make its way into their literature. Buddhism believes in Kusal Kamma and Akusal Kamma. Kusal Kamma i.e. good deed takes man as an individual and society towards happiness and peace whereas Akusal Kamma i.e. bad deeds lead the man and society towards degradation. Since Buddhism does not believe in life after death, the good and

bad consequences fell upon man during their lifetime. Dalit Literature, especially poetry shows its affinity with the Law of Kamma as taught by Buddha. According to the Noble Eightfold Path, Moral Code of Conducts 'shila' comprised of Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood.

In his poem *"Ambedkar 1980"* on the messiah of Dalits, Dr. Ambedkar, Namdeo Dhasal meditates upon the sufferings of Dr. Ambedkar while developing his movements along with his fellow brothers. The poem ends with the thought of purge and peace:

"While I was writing this
Three o'clock struck
Though I want to have a drink
I don't feel like drinking
I only want to sleep peacefully
And tomorrow see no varnas, no castes." (Anand 1992: p59)

Buddhist people refrain from any such profession which could possibly threaten to any form of life. The Dalits believed in hard work and right earning which is called as Sammaajivo in Pali. Jyoti Lanjewar's *"Mother"* sets an example by accepting labour to support the family:

"Mother! I have seen you
...
Hanging your little ones in a cradle on an acasia tree
Carrying barrels of tar
Working on a road construction crew..." (Anand 1992: p99)

In another poem "*Disguise"* Jyoti Lanjewar compares men with animals behaving beastly, who would not be accepted in the society. According to her animals domesticated, could live peacefully in human inhabitant. But men became beast could not even find a place in circus. Therefore, she touches the Buddha's Kamma theory:

"Untamed beasts in circus
Have to be humanised first

Only then...like humans
They gradually tend to behave.
But in a country of human beings
When a human
Behaves beastlike-
There's no place for him
Even in the circus
And the bemused animals
Regret to marvel any longer at him" (Lanjewar 2008: p59)

Waman Nimbalkar's "Mother" also adopted Sammaaajivo i.e. right livelihood to support her family. She sees her children sleep empty stomach, when she earns nothing:

"As she walked, the burden on her head shook, shifted
Dark dark slender body-this was my mother.
Drugged in the woods for sticks from morning on."
(Anand 1992: p121)

In his another poem "Words" Nimbalkar speaks about the effects of words. As in Buddhism it is believed violence could not be done on verbal level as well.

"Words it is that set aflame houses, homes, countries.
Men as well
Words extinguish even the fire
In men set aflame by words." (Anand 1992: p124)

In *Rainy Weather* by Yashwant Manohar, right action has been expected by the poet from the oppressed to bring sovereign age of light:

"Gathering aarati for revolution rainy weathers!

I Say-
In this heaths of eyes a culture of revolt
Let us place its blue print
First with sky in our words
Let us tie relation with them
It won't go closing eyes on any horizon

We'll keep in mind that threshold carrying explosives
Turns faithless
And we'll keep in mind to know this capacity
Those who balances these burdens
Ways of dwellings never rob their feet. (Manohar 2009: pp 69-70)

Dalit poets follow the teachings of Buddha, therefore, Moral Code of Conduct have been essentially reflected through their works. The anger and revolt in Dalit poetry are its necessary elements, but they don't invoke readers for bloody revolution. Dalit poetry through Buddhist Morality connects man with man. It rejected authority which enslaved them under caste system.

Contemplation (Samadhi)

Samadhi is the third element of the Noble eightfold path, which is the basis for developing concentration and contemplation to get enlightenment. Ambedkarite writers believe in contemplating on the causes of their plight and annihilation of their sufferings. Dr. Ambedkar created a massive literature to know their past of glory as well as past of dehumanisation. The contemplation helps them adopt right way to or the middle way out to survive in such situations.

Jyoti Lanjewar contemplates on the subject of Dalits and their relationship with other upper caste communities in terms of give and take in her poem "The Nightingale Never Warbled":

"What have these trees given us?
Nay...what did we receive?
How much was allowed to be taken?
Till the date we only picked
The decayed litter of leaves-
Never touched the blossoms and leaves" (Lanjewar 2008: p46)

In another poem "what for were you born" the poet is in search of the basis of her life in this unjust country:

"What for were you born
In this slovenly wasteland
Here all promethean trees are felled
And the lampposts-
Have long rust-cankered" (Lanjewar 2008: p51)

Daya Pawar wants an active and radical Buddha. The present time which is hostile to Dalits needs a revolutionary Buddha who rejected the dogma of Vedic religion and revolted against the Brahmanism. Buddha in deep meditation bothers the poet when his generation is suffering. Therefore, the poet wants a transformed Buddha. Pawar's poem "Buddha" is his contemplation on the Buddhism in present time:

Buddha is always the source of inspiration to Dalit poets. Buddha's teachings through Dr. Ambedkar taught Dalits to meditate upon the thoughts. Therefore, contemplation upon one's actions and thoughts is taken as the subject of interest for the Dalit writers. But Ambedkarite writers don't want Buddha contemplating with close eyes; instead they want an active Buddha with open eyes. The traditional concept of meditation has undergone sea change in Dalit writings. It has got different aspects through Dr. Ambedkar's Movements. Dalit writers have shown broad thinking on the plight of Dalit community and have been guiding them towards achievement of their human rights and enlightenment.

Rejection of God, Soul (Anatta) and Acceptance of Rationality

Buddha doesn't believe in any such powers or God or Goddesses which controls human's fate. At the same time Buddha rejects the possibility of soul which left previous body and enters into another body. Buddha doesn't believe in Parmatma (soul) the divine soul. Buddha supports the rationality and science. Ambedkarite Buddhists also accepted the same position of belief in God and Soul.

Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar's rejection to such entity and accepted by Dalit writers has become a natural phenomenon of their creative works. Therefore, rejection of all such elements which are irrational and cause for the slavery of Dalits becomes the essential nature of Dalit poetry. Dalit poetry upheld the rationality of Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar.

Dhasal in his poem "Amber / Sky Alcohols in the Glass" rejected the god and challenges to the exponent of god sarcastically:

"Come come come come God
Crush the frogs in the earthenware pot
Blow out the lamp
Of the generations
Suck, drool over the pelvic bone" (Anand 1992: p 49)

In the poem "*Ambedkar: 1980"* Dhasal puts forward his idea of rationality when he rejected the god Ganesh and replaces him with Dr. Ambedkar. The mother in poem handed her son a slate and an arithmetic book and taught him to become great like Babasaheb:

"Make B for Babasaheb
He was far more beautiful than Lord Ganesh
So don't trace
Shri Ganesh
The lord of the people is never ugly
He comes from among men
True/Holy/Beautiful
Babasaheb Ambedkar
Otherwise this book has no meaning." (Anand 1992: p59)

In yet another poem Dhasal created the awakened son who is inspired by Dr. Ambedkar and his Movements. He is the representative of the rebellion generation of this age who rejected god and develops rationality:

"Mother your son is not a child
He is the son of this age's rebellion

He can see clearly the injustice, himself as victim."
(Anand 1992: p61)

Keshav Meshram sarcastically scolded god for making Dalits life so unjust. In the poem *"One Day I Cursed that Mother-Fucker God"*

"One day I cursed that mother-fucker God
He just laughs shamelessly." (Anand 1992: p117)

Daya Pawar in his Poem "*The Gods Ochre*" rejected god and rituals and traditions which are meant to promote slavery and discrimination for Dalits:

All that was yours was devastated
So the gods of the god house
...
Lighting the torch in broad daylight
Brandishing weapons in eight hands
Panting with bloody tongues
They beat the drums of tradition." (Anand 1992: p128)

The doubly marginalized woman represented through the poems of Jyoti Lanjewar. In her poem *"Life Long Kinship"*she opens up front against god, traditions and rituals which enslaved woman under religion and patriarchy. The protest by the poet is intense and challenging:

"Those that have drunk
To the darkness of orthodoxy
Those that invoke religion for self
For all such heads and pundits
I will dig mines, lay trenches
And fill gunpowder
To balk them all." (Lanjewar 2008: p 29)

Anatta has been adopted in Dalit Literature as the essential rejection to the existing beliefs which enslaved Dalits in the country. Dalit writers bring consciousness about their plight in the caste system, held the unjust social order responsible for the degradation of Dalits. These writers take

sarcasm as the sharp weapon to attack on these belief systems. The attack as rejection comes from the anger and protest. Namdeo Dhasal and Keshav Meshram represent the first generation Dalit poets and open their bitter verbal attack on the illogical and unjustified social order and religious system which was the cause for untouchability and discrimination.

Anicca i.e. Universal Law of Impermanence:

One of the basic principles of Buddhism is Anicca i.e. Law of Impermanence. According to Buddha nothing in this universe is permanent. Every mater changes its forms. It could neither be created not could be destroyed. Everybody changes according to the advancement of age. Man is mortal and entitled to old age, diseases and finally death. Dalit Literature accepted this as a Law of Impermanence which helps develop rationality. The blind belief in the name of religion and concepts like rebirth are responsible factors for mental slavery and Dalit Literature rejects such concepts.

Dhasal sees human body as mortal; behind carnal lust he can only see a skeleton. This is the knowledge of human life, which affects Dhasal and made him curse the mate of that sex worker in poem *"Amber/Sky Alcohols in the Glass":*

"Your mate
Abracadabraca
Skeleton in petticoat
Prayers to himself for his own realm" (Anand 1992: p449)

Dhasal's Consciousness on the position of Dalit in the unjust society, taught him the preaching in temples is hollow since, such propagators seek shelter in lust in Falkland road, the red light district in Mumbai. In the poem "*Their Eternal Pity*" Dhasal challenges Brahmanism because he knew the truth behind the institutionalizing of religion:

"Their eternal pity—no taller than the pimp on Falkland road.

No pavilion put up in the sky for us." (Anand 1992: p52)

Namdeo in "*Ambedkar: 1980"* talks about the human life, its sufferings and death as the ultimate truth. For him happiness lies before the death. A concept of life after death is not accepted in Buddhism so also to this rationalist Dalit poet:

"The real man lives before death
The rest is simply dust, swirling dust
In place of death I'm trying to establish Beauty."
(Anand 1992: p54)

In the poem "*These Voices*" Jyoti Lanjewar compares moving and shaking water which is not constant, with the changing mind like an unsteady current of flux. Both the images created by the poet represents the Law of Impermanence:

"With the moving and shaking waters
The moving and shaking mind
Now unceremoniously emblazons
Come let's drown
In these waters before us." (Lanjewar 2008: p 36)

In the poem of Yashwant Manohar *"I See"* the poet creates the images of changing forms of objects in the nature. The comparisons of falling trees with the dying men are horrendously presented here:

"I see flocks of deaths
When evening shadows became longer
I see uprooted trees falling
Hurriedly waving hands like branches of those falling trees
And it's merging with the dust" (Manohar 2009: p11)

Daya Pawar created an image of the twentieth century and presented the thought that this city too will perish one day as old civilisations. The poet is keeping in touch with the

ground, interpreting the advancement of modern society approaching towards destruction:

> "One day someone dug up a twentieth century city
> It's lying there now like a wade of paper
> Crumpled by a gigantic fist
> In it are traces of the "machine age"-
> Wheels, pieces of metal
> Smokestacks like old cigarette butts." (Anand 1992: p129)

The Hindu society which believes in the permanence of soul or eternity of soul, denies the salvation to Dalits beyond their ghetto. No untouchable can take birth in upper caste families. This very concept was rejected first by Buddha. According to Buddhism nothing is permanent in this universe, every living being or material elements are in constant change. The principle of annica inspires Dalits to realise the false notions of beliefs they were forced to accept as religion. The concept of life after death was woven around the permanence of soul. So it gave way to spread of superstitions. Buddha taught wisdom to realise the false beliefs were real cause for the low socio-economic conditions of Dalits. Dalit poets have shown this realisation into their poetry significantly. Therefore, their poetry accepted the thought of impermanence and became sharp sarcastic weapon against all such false beliefs like immortality of soul and incarnation or rebirth of living being.

Nibbana (Enlightenment)

Nibbana is one of the essential elements of Buddhism to be realising by its practitioner. The enlightenment is the stage of Bodhi mind which occurs to the practitioners after cessation of the worldly desires and cravings. Enlightenment is also a kind of freedom from the sufferings, anxiety and fear of loss and death. Dalit poets under the influence of Ambedkarite Buddhism significantly show their awareness to the concept of nibbana as the freedom from all sufferings.

The primary liberty they seek from the unjust caste system which was the cause of their suffering show significant awareness about free from all material desires and cravings on the other hand. The practice of the Noble eightfold path prominently been observed in the works of these poets which is the foundation of the path of nibbana.

Dr. Ambedkar is considered as the Bodhisattva by his followers. Bodhisattva is the person having potential to be Buddha. In fact a person got enlightenment in the life of Bodhisattva. For Namdeo Dhasal, Dr. Ambedkar is no less than Buddha the enlightened one. The Sammyak Sambuddha is the self-tutor who got enlightenment without any guidance from anybody and has ability to help many to attain their enlightenment. Dr. Ambedkar ended the slavery of ex-untouchables and helped them restore their self-dignity and respect. In his poem *"Ambedkar: 1980"* Namdeo Dhasal found Dr. Ambedkar as the enlightened person like Bodhisattva:

"But you lived like a man
There was no acting in it
No dramatics
No imitation, no imitators" (Anand 1992: p56)

The enlightened one always remains calm even if people raise fingers toward them. They remain compassionate to every needy and poor. In the same poem Dhasal counted the quality of compassion as essential element in Buddha as shown by Dr. Ambedkar towards his followers:

We've done things to you, even so,
Anything can be done to you
But the question of my loyalty
My honesty
Still remains." (Anand 1992: p57)

He also understood from Buddhism that enlightened persons are not gods or divine, they are from human race:

"The lords of the people is never ugly
He comes from among men
True/Holy/Beautiful
Babasaheb Ambedkar
Is true, holy, beautiful
Otherwise this book has no meaning."(Anand 1992: p59)

Dhasal is optimistic about the freedom of Dalits from the age old oppression. He could listen to the crooning of enlightenment to the Dalits in this land, as he concluded in one of his poems *Song of the Republic and the Dog*with this optimism:

"My mind is turning into blood-bathed doves
The messengers of peace are dashing along the path of
The sky.
The song emerges from the chaos, the song of the
Republic
"Give alms, the eclipse is over".
"Give alms, the eclipse is over". (Anand 1992: p71)

The concept of enlightened one to the Dalit writers is quite contradictory to the traditional beliefs in Buddhism. Dalit writers expected Buddha to be active and not merely sitting under the Peepal tree meditating. Daya Pawar portrays his expectations of enlightened one, the one who attained Nibbana in his poem *Buddha*:

"I see you
Walking talking
Breathing softly, healingly
On the sorrow of the poor, the weak
Going from hut to hut
In the life destroying darkness
Torch in hand
Giving the sorrow
That drains the blood
Like a contagious disease
A new meaning" (Anand 1992: p127)

People search their happiness in the material world. Also they seek shelter in liquor shops implicating their helplessness. Dalit writers learned Wisdom from Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar that such a pursuit of happiness is fruitless. Jyoti Lanjewar in her poem *Had I Died in the Womb*, shows her understanding of happiness of nibbana:

"Recklessly we search
For transformation in our state-
In the shady booze bars and gambling dens
Little we know she is not there at all" (Lanjewar 2008: p48)

The freedom from sufferings could be realized through the detachment of the worldly life. In the concluding lines of *Sting* Lanjewar brings forward her understanding of worldly detachments:

"Planting pretty delicate promises
The ones who have been
Blotted...burgled...
Bilked...becharmed...
Better still...for those who
Broke the umbilical cord
Only to become a man" (Lanjewar 2008: pp 61-62)

Yashwant Manohars's poetry comes up with absolute optimism towards attaining freedom and happiness. His poetry is a stunning blend of rejection, protest and optimism in eventual freedom. His poem *Here after* brings such aspect of optimism for freedom:

Now I accept only
Inevitable battlefield before me
Where primarily would destroy
Your culture
Your Supreme soul
Your spiritualism
You temples
These all your stores of ammunitions
And it's loving parents as you

And I believe
My words accepted by clever land
First clear sky after our victory
First clear eyes
First clear liberal wind
And high head of humanism for always
Man's forehead." (Manohar 2009: p 2)

Waman Nimbalkar is also optimistic about the freedom being achieved. Dr. Ambedkar's Movement of emancipation brought a ray of hope to Dalits. This freedom is nonetheless than Nibbana to him. His aspect of freedom and optimism is well expressed in his poem *Tomorrow's Sun*

"I have been dreaming the dawn

The darkness on the village periphery is going to be ceased

On the daybreak the lyrics of lights on our lips

Rocking the ten directions." (Rangarao 2007: p 21)

In his poem *Kavita* he refers to Buddha as Tathagata which transpires is indicative of his idea of Humanism. This Humanism follows the Buddhist Values and enjoys the very concept of Nibbana:

"Gathering the sky in my eyes

I cast my glance forward

...and so on to Tathagatha.

On the horizon I will erect

The rainbow arch of mankind." (Zelliot 2001: p 284)

Nibanna as a theme appeared in Dalit poetry as the ultimate freedom. Dalit poets seek freedom and liberty from the clutches of oppressive social system. Dalit poets show significant optimism about future due to the movement work of Dr. Ambedkar.

Buddhist Humanism as Saddhamma (Compassion, Love and Metta)

Compassion

Compassion has unparalleled importance in Buddhism. To become the enlightened one, the practitioner has to develop Compassion along with Panna. Compassion as a quality of Arhat helps human beings to achieve inner peace and happiness. The sorrows and sufferings become the same for him. "The word usually translated as "Compassion" is Karuna, which is understood to mean active sympathy or a willingness to bear the pain of others." (O'Brien, 2014). For Dr. Ambedkar, Compassion is Saddhamma. According to Buddha, "Whosoever in this world harms living beings once-born or twice-born, in whom there is no compassion for living beings—know ye that he is an outcast. Whosoever destroys and besieges villages and hamlets, and is known as an oppressor-know you that he is an outcaste." (Ambedkar 1997: p307)

Dalit Literature adopted Karuna as its essential quality to express thoughts and situation. Dalit writers who are part of the society see every oppressed, poor, marginalised, labourers, women, tribal, etc. as his fellow brother. Their pain and sufferings becomes the same for the poet. It is through Compassion that the Dalit poet creates and establishes a bond with his fellow brother who is in need of empathy.

In his poem *"Ambedkar: 1980"* Dhasal portrays the Compassion of Bodhisattva. Dr. Ambedkar is called as Bodhisattva by his followers. Here in this stanza, Dhasal who is seeking an excuse from Dr. Ambedkar for not been able to follow his guidance, sees consequently the unity of Ambedkarite Community been shaken profoundly:

"I've cursed you too, but
You gave us the tongue to curse

I've even sunk you in the water, but
You gave us water." (Anand 1992: p57)

Jyoti Lanjewar created the figure of Compassionate mother, representing the mother of the Ambedkarite Community. In *"Mother"* Jyoti Lanjewar portrays an image of Compassion with the mother-child bonding. Being a Dalit woman, the poet's relatedness with her mother is powerfully expressed in the stanza:

"I have seen you
With basket of earth on your head
Rags bound on your feet
Giving a sweaty kiss to the naked child
Who come tottering over to you
Working for your daily wage, working, working..."
(Anand 1992: p99)

Waman Nimbalkar's *"Mother"* also similarly brought intense feeling of the poet towards his mother. Whenever he finds a figure similar to his mother, he is moved with the emotion of Compassion:

"My eyes seek my mother. I still grieve
I see a thin vendor of wood. I buy her sticks" (Anand 1992: p122)

Love and Metta:

The teachings of Buddha are to develop love for everyone in the Universe. Maitri is one step ahead of love. Buddha says, "Maitri is extending fellow feeling to all beings, not only to one who is a friend but also to one who is a foe : not only to man but to all living beings." (Ambedkar 1997: p128) Dalit literature adopted the teachings of Buddha and love and maitri as its essential element that binds man with man.

Dhasal expresses his Love towards his mother in the poem *"So that my Mother may be convinced..."*

"In your petty-petty mind

Resounding kisses and overflowing love" (Anand1992: p62)

Jyoti Lanjewar spread her Metta towards the entire humanity through her poem *"Nameless Ones":*

"For the sake of the poetry of humanity
One must be so very human."(Anand 1992: p104)

Daya Pawar in his poem *"Siddhartha Nagar"* compares the bandit Angulimal with today's bandits and cruel men as oppressors. He expresses his inability to generate that Compassion of Buddha who tamed Angulimal through his immense metta.

"O Siddhartha
You made a tyrant like Angulimala
Tremble
We are your humble followers."(Anand 1992: p136)

In *"Pray for Human"*, Yashwant Manohar extended his love and metta towards all human kind and especially to those who are discriminated and oppressed:

"I will give account of all those whose life became barren here
I don't worship words; I sing hymns for human beings
My imagination became flames when I see some innocent is burning". (Manohar 2009: p35)

In the same poem he continued developing his metta towards his fellow brothers who are helpless:

"My poems are for those whose breaths has no directions
My poems are for those whose hearts have lost all hopes
For those who has no shelter here, no habitat, no names
Whose world has not yet born?
And future too unaware of their age
I wish my words become trees of singing hymns of wisdom and light" (Manohar 2009: p36)

Human Values (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Justice)

Buddha supports human values and gives utmost importance to these Values as a matter of rule in human social life. Buddha says, "A society which rests upon the

supremacy of one group over another irrespective of its rational or proportionate claims inevitably leads to conflict." (Ambedkar 1997: p325) According to Buddha, a group setup leads to discrimination and denial of justice. Also group setup gives rise to stratifications. The Master remains a master and a slave remains a slave. So liberty will be enjoyed by limited, which means equality for few and not for all. Therefore, the only remedy is to make the fraternity universally effective.

Dr. Ambedkar picked up this sutra from his master, the Enlightened Buddha. The constitutional provisions in India are made by keeping these values in mind. The Preamble of the Constitution of India declares these universal human values for its people at large. For Dalits, the Constitution is a sacred book as *"The Buddha and His Dhamma"* is to them. These human values are inculcated deep- rooted in the psyche of Dalit literature.

Namdeo Dhasal in the poem *"Song of Republic and the Dog"* brought forward the theme of human values effectively. In this poem he created the picture of two major class oppressors who overthrow the values and the oppressed class who is robbed in this system struggling to live a life of dignity. Dhasal felt that the freedom propagated in the streets is pseudo.

"In the crowded streets
The drums of bunkus freedom are played."(Anand 1992: p68)

Dhasal is well oriented about the values as the outcome of Ambedkar Movement. Therefore, freedom as expected to him is already proposed in the Constitution which was robbed by some people for their self-interests.

Dhasal's concept of equality could be observed from his poem *Man, You Should Explode* where he expected all the classes to come together for the cause of Humanity.

"After this those who survive should stop robbing anyone or making others their slaves
After this they should stop calling one another names white or black, brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, or Shudra;
Stop creating political parties, stop building property, stop committing
The crime of not recognizing one's kin, not recognizing one's mother or sister" (Dhasal 2007: p11)

Staunch believer in human values, Dhasal also realised that the identity of the country would be lost if equality is not restored. In his *Ode to Dr. Ambedkar: 1978*, he began and concluded with these lines:

"EQUALITY FOR ALL
OR
DEATH TO INDIA
-and carved on heart."(Dhasal 2007: pp 51-53)

Dhasal is moved with the age old sufferings of his fellow brothers. He realised that without struggle, Dalits could not be liberated. He is ready to be martyred for his fraternity which he expresses in the poem '*Concomitantly: December 6*' dedicated to Dr. Ambedkar on his death anniversary:

"My original ancestors were dark Dravidian non-Aryans

I too would like to be martyred
For my people's sake." (Dhasal 2007: pp72-73)

Dhasal expanded his fraternity towards every man in the world. In his poem *Man, You Should Explode*, he wished all men to live and share this world as their common abode.

"One should share each morsel of food with everyone else, one should
Compose a hymn
To humanity itself, man, man, should sing only the song of man" (Dhasal 2007: p11)

The idea of nurturing and teaching absolute freedom has got dynamic blending in the poetry of Jyoti Lanjewar in *"Leadership"* an allegorical poem. In this poem the trees provide shelter to birds and one day these very trees are instrumental in teaching these tiny birds to fly in the open sky, thus making them independent. The allegory is based on Lanjewar's idea of leadership. Leaders of the marginalised communities are nurtured by the community and to shoulder responsibility of the society one day. But, on the other hand, the poem sarcastically attacks the local leaders who built their own groups and become group leaders with a narrow vision.

"Sometimes trees turn providers
Not to one but several birds
With them
Indulge in child play
Help them
To build nests
For others
Protect their younglings
Provide warmth of leaves (Lanjewar 2008: p73)

The contemporary caste system is a lookalike like the ferocious Angulimal to the poet Daya Pawar. Angulimal was tamed by Buddha and he later became a Buddhist monk and started serving people. But the present caste system is unjustified and unpardonable and to overthrow it, a collective struggle is required. This fight against tyranny of caste system is justified and reasonable. So Pawar conveys his prayer to Buddha:

"How should we confront
This ferocious Angulimal?
O Siddhartha
If we fight tooth and claw
Try to understand us
Try to understand us." (Anand 1992: Pp137-138)

In the poem *An Enemy*, Yashwant Manohar expresses his agony over his bondage, his inner turmoil and struggle to get freedom and has a high intensity of this expression:

"Those who made sun, stone
Coloured with spirituality for selfishness
Fixed merits and demerits of their own way
I run plough over all those cunning traditions
Those all gods and theists are my enemy
Who made hymns of untouchability and sung itssweet ovees
They all concrete and attribute-less believer in oral evidences are my enemy
Who never allowed me to liberate till today. (Manohar 2009: p77)

Dalit poets show significant awareness about the Human Values and Human Cause. Dalits realised the importance of Human Values who borne the age old suffering and dehumanisation of casteism. They therefore showcased an intense support and favour towards these values. As a consequence Dalit poetry built itself on the Value system they learned from Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar. Their faith in the Constitutional Democratic Values as the outcome of Indigenous Culture could easily be observed through poetry.

Buddhist Cultural Symbols in Dalit Poetry

The uses of Buddha Statues or Idols were not in vogue in the earlier centuries. Buddhist symbolism started from3rd century BCE with iconic symbolism and anthropomorphic symbolism that started from the 1st century CE including Art and Architecture of Mathura and Gandhara style. Earliest Buddhist Art symbolises Buddha and his teachings through the Lotus, the Stupa, the Dhamma Wheel (the Wheel of Law) and the Bodhi tree. "As Buddhism spread, Buddhist symbolism was enriched by the cultures it came into contact with. This is especially true of Buddhism in Tibet, which has developed a rich symbolic tradition." (Religionfacts.com 2016) "The first hint of a human

representation in Buddhist symbolism appears with the Buddha footprint." (Singh 2009: p242) Other symbolic representations like, Mudras of Buddha (hand gestures) and colours in art form were also found in the later centuries frequently.

Since the Conversion of 1956, Buddhism influenced the lives of Dalits. The post Conversion time period shows a significant impact of Buddhism on Literature, Art, Architecture and Performing Arts by the Ambedkarite community. Many symbols and myths from Buddhism are popular amongst Dalit writers and artists. Some of these symbols have naturally found its way into the Dalit writings especially by Neo Buddhists writers. Since, Dalit poetry has its base on Buddhism and Dr. Ambedkar's thought, it reflects the Value system of Buddhism through various symbols. The commonly observed Buddhist symbols in Dalit poetry are:

1. Walking Buddha
2. Lotus
3. Dhamma wheel
4. Asoka Wheel
5. Stupa (Deekshabhoomi)
6. Bodhi Tree
7. White Colour
8. Lion Pillar

The Walking Buddha

The Walking Buddha signifies grace and internal beauty. The Walking Buddha is always shown with his right hand raised, facing outward, while the left hand dangles along the left side of his body and standing with his right foot behind, starting to rise off the ground. (Thebuddhagarden.com 2016)

Though Buddha in the meditation mudra is highly popular, many Dalit writers have different expectations from Buddha. According to them, the Walking Buddha appealed to them more because in this pose they see an active and interacting Buddha who is helping people understand and solve their sufferings instead of his Meditation mudra. Daya Pawar's poem *Buddha* brought such aspect about Buddha incidentally representing Ambedkarite writers. In the first part, Pawar expresses his imagination of the Buddha who was not in dhyana mudra.

"I never see you
In Jetwana's garden sitting with closed eyes
In meditation, in lotus position" (Anand 1992: p127)

In the later stanza, Pawar unveils his idea of Buddha as Walking Talking and Interacting with people:

I see you walking talking,
Breathing softly, healingly
On the sorrow of the poor, the weak
Going from hut to hut
In the life destroying darkness
Torch in hand" (Anand 1992: p127)

In Waman Nimbalkar's *Kavita*, Buddha's image appeared and shows his influence upon the writers mind. Here he caompares Buddha's Compassion with the limitless sky

"Gathering the sky in my eyes
I cast my glance forward
---and so on to Tathagata" (Zelliot 2010: p284)

Buddha appeared in many Dalit Poems. Similar to their master, Dr. Ambedkar, they too wished a Walking Buddha who actively is engaged in the welfare of people.

Lotus

The Lotus flower is the symbol of purity in Buddhism, the purity of body, speech and mind. Symbol of lotus is one of the eight important symbols in Buddhism. The lotus flower emerges from the mud and remains untouched of impurities. "It is floating above the muddy water of attachment and desire, represents the full blossoming of wholesome deeds in blissful liberation."(Singh 2009: p247) "The lotus is moreover the only plant in which flower and fruit co-exist simultaneously (cause and effect exist simultaneously in all phenomenon, according to Buddhist teachings)" (The Seeker's Glossary of Buddhism, 1998)

Namdeo Dhasal spent much of his life in the neighbourhood of the infamous red light district of Mumbai named Kamathipura. This place as he witnessed was full of sufferings to the poor sex workers having no hope for their future. In many of his poems Dhasal brought forward multiple agonies and struggle of these women for dignity of life. The poem *Kamathipura* ends with the poets wish seeking liberation of Kamathipura with the Buddhist symbol, the Lotus:

"O Kamathipura
Tucking all seasons under your armpit
You squat in the mud here
I go beyond all the pleasures and pains of whoring and wait
For your lotus to bloom
-A lotus in the mud. (Dhasal 2007: p44)

In this poem Dhasal intensified the feelings and the sufferings of these poor people, and found himself belonging to them who are highly oppressed in this social structure.

The Asoka Wheel

The Ashok Wheel is symbolic of 'Dhammachkkapavattana', Buddha's first sermon delivered to his first five disciples in Sarnath. With this sermon

Buddha founded the Buddha Sangha. It is also called as the Wheel of Dhamma. The Wheel also signifies the law of dependent origination. Taking the idea of running of Dhammachakra, Asoka built the Wheel with 24 spokes in it on various rock edicts. The prominent of them was the Wheel with the four lion heads. The Asoka Wheel is adopted on the Tri-colour's blue shade of India.

Jyoti Lanjewar uses this symbol for comparing her mother's vermillion mark on her forehead in her poem *Mother of this Motherland*. The poet shows her awareness of the Wheel of the Law being a Buddhist.

> "The vermillion mark of your forehead-
> Accords semblance to the Ashok Chakra" (Lanjewar 2008: p39)

Jyotyi Lanjewar portrays her mother in a number of poems as the true Ambedkarite and a Buddhist. The poor hardworking lady was depicted as the dedicated cadre of the Ambedkar Movement.

The Stupa (Deekshabhoomi)

The Stupa is an important Buddhist structure which is usually round in shape like an upturned bell. The Stupas were built to house the relics of Buddha in different parts which were distributed amongst his disciples and followers after his great demise. "The most common use of stupa is as a place for sacred relics, and as a focus for the devotion of a Buddhist community. Walking around the stupa in a clockwise direction is considered as an act of merit" (Singh 2009: p256)

Deekshabhoomi is a Stupa and replica of the Sanchi Stupa. It also housed the relics of Dr. Ambedkar who embraced Buddhism along with his millions of followers for his egalitarian approach for the New Society. The Conversion at Deekshabhoomi was also taken as the revolt against Hindu caste system protected under the pretext of

religious beliefs and is a cause for dehumanisation of the Dalits. Therefore, Deekshabhoomi is considered as the most sacred place equally like other Buddhist places.

An event of Dr. Ambedkar's life is attached with Deekshabhoomi. Once, his wife Ramabai wanted to go to Pandharpur for offering her prayer to Lord Vitthala. Being a rationalist, Dr. Ambedkar forbade her, because he knew that Ramabai would not be allowed to go inside the temple since she was an untouchable. Therefore, he expresses his determination before Ramabai that he was going to build their own Pandharpur which will see no discrimination amongst the followers. This wish of Dr. Ambedkar later became the common unconscious wish of his followers. Therefore, after his demise the Deekshabhoomi, the place where he embraced Buddhism was built by the donations of people to make it the Symbol of Dalit's Liberation and Unity. Many Dalit poets made the Deekshabhoomi as the subject of their poetry. In the poem *I Never Saw You*, Jyoti Lanjewar narrated that her poor mother used to give donations to Deekshabhoomi:

"I have seen you
On your death bed
Giving that money you earned
Rag picking to the DikshaBhoomi
Saying with your dying breath
"Live in unity...fight for Baba...doesn't forget him..."
(Anand 1992: p102)

Lanjewar's mother had high respect and support towards the Deekshabhoomi. It is noteworthy here that she earned money from rag picking, yet she happily donated it for building the structure of Deekshabhoomi. She realised the importance and significance of Deekshabhoomi after the Conversion.

Bodhi Tree

Peepal tree is commonly held as the Bodhi tree amongst Buddhists all over the world. In Bodh Gaya Sakyamuni Siddhartha at the age of 35 attained supreme Enlightenment on the full moon day under the Peepal tree (old sacred fig tree). It is also said that after reaching Bodhi, a state of mind, Buddha spent the entire week sitting around the tree paying his respect and gratefulness towards it thus The Peepal tree under which he was Enlightened became a sacred place. Emperor Asoka built the Mahabodhi Temple adjacent to this tree to mark the memory of Buddha's Enlightenment. "In the centuries after the Buddha, the Bodhi tree became a symbol of the Buddha's presence and an object of worship."(Dharma Data: Bodhi Tree, 2016)

Bodhi Tree along with Deekshabhoomi of Nagpur and Chaitya Stupa of Mumbai, became the theme of Dalit Poetry. The Bodhi tree appeared in many Ambedkarite and other writer's poetry as the symbol of Buddha's Enlightenment and Awakening of Wisdom. Daya Pawar in his poem *Tree* compares the Tree as an object similar to the Bodhi tree. For Daya Pawar the Bodhi tree flowers meant inspiration that lead the life to Awakening and Wisdom.

> "This tree I saw mangled with sorrow
> Had roots as deep as the Bodhi-tree's
> But the Bodhi-tree flowered
> And this tree through all seasons was barren." (Anand 1992: p134)

The Lion Pillar

The Lion Pillar is known as the Lion Capital of Asoka. It is the sculpture of four lions standing back to back symbolizing group of four things of equal importance. They also symbolise *the Four Noble Truths* discovered by Buddha. The Lion frequently represents the Buddha in Buddhism. It was erected by Emperor Asoka in 250 BCE. The Pillar carries the Dhamma Wheel along with the Lion

Capital. Lion Capital is also adopted as the National emblem of India by the Constitution Assembly in 1950.

Namdeo Dhasal referred the Lion Capital in his poem *Approaching the Organised Harem of the Octopus:*

> "I am the one who drew the head on the lion pillar" (Dhasal 2007: p23)

In the poem Dhasal recounts the contribution of Dalits in the development and prosperity of India. Yet they were discriminated under caste system. The exquisite monument which enhances the historical importance and rich heritage of India was built on the hard work of Dalits. Dhasal wants the people to realize that The Lion Capital which was adopted as the National Emblem was made by Dalits. Through this line Dhasal connects Dalits with Buddhist Cultural traditions effectively.

In a nutshell, Dalit Literature is born out of Dalit's Conversion of 1956 into Buddhism. Since then Buddhism became the way of life to all the Converted Buddhists. The significant change in the day to day life of Dalits and the psychological confidence building was significantly seen during this period. The poetry is the most popular genre exploited by the writers. It reached its maturity with poets like Namdeo Dhasal, Keshav Meshram, Waman Kardak, Waman Nimbalkar, Daya Pawar, Yashwant Manohar, Jyoti Lanjewar, etc. The nature of Dalit Poetry expresses rejection and protest that took shape with these first generation writers. Dalit Consciousness which is essentially distinguished from the traditional poetry is born out of Buddhism. Dalit writers are directly inspired by Dr. Ambedkar and his Dhamma "Navyana", therefore, their literature naturally shows a significant influence of these philosophies and way of life taught by Buddha. Buddhist

Principles and Moral Code of Conduct could highly be realized in Dalit Poetry.

The other Principles of Buddhism like Anatta (Non-soul), Anicca (Impermanence), belive in the non-existence of god or any power controlling human life. These radical Principles of Buddha extracted by Dr. Ambedkar incorporated in the Twenty Two Vows as oath taken by Dalits, could be seen in their poetry. Dalit Literature believed in Buddhist Humanism and Buddhist Socialism. The poetry of Dalits strives to bring Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and Justice in the country. Dalit Poetry sings the song of the oppressed, poor, and marginalised men and women. The ultimate aim of Dalit Poetry is to bring "Prabuddha Bharat" i.e. Enlightened India, the dream of Dr. Ambedkar into reality. Dalit Poetry significantly adopted symbolism from Buddhist Cultural Tradition. Symbols like the various Mudras, the Stupa, the Lotus, Bodhi Tree, the Dhamma Wheel and the Lion Head are the symbols used in Buddhist Cultural Traditions to represent Buddha's teachings.

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Four

Dalit Autobiography and Buddhism

Introduction

Like Poetry, Dalit Autobiography also brought a horrendous illustration of a community through self-narrative. It brings forward a world of hunger, poverty, insult, oppression, injustice and struggle of Dalits to survive on the literary canvas. Though autobiography begins with the personal life, it however soon develops the family into the large community struggling for their existence. The autobiography runs into two different sets of the paradigm. The first paradigm is "from being to becoming" and the other "pre Conversion Dalit Community" and "the post Conversion Transformed Community". In both the paradigm the common thread is Buddhism and Dr. Ambedkar's influence on Dalit lives.

Dalits, who have been subjugated for centuries in the name of caste, suffered a lot. In the name of Chaturvarna, they have been sidelined from the mainstream. For centuries they have tolerated inhuman treatment. Dr. Ambedkar kindled in these Dalits a spark to live like human beings. Dalit Literature, particularly autobiography became a prominent medium for Dalits to express themselves completely without any inhibition. These autobiographies covered life of Dalits who were crushed under the typical Indian social hierarchy. Thus they acted as a mirror of the

entire Dalit community and revealed to the world the untold, unreserved and undisclosed life of the Dalits. Buddhist Philosophy through Dr. Ambedkar in the life of Dalits brought a sea change. It is a graphical representation of a historical or an anthropological change in the socio-cultural life of Dalits. "It is in these autobiographies that we come across the authenticities of experience, rather, lived experiences which form the bedrock of Dalit literature coming to us in different forms, like poetry, fiction and others". (Singh 2013: p14)It not only records a change from a Hindu Dalit community to a Buddhist Community, but also gave a graph of up gradation in the standards of a Dalit's life. Some Dalit autobiographies prominently record these changes very prominently.

Literature grows directly out of life. Therefore the main source of all forms of literature is life itself. According to W. H. Hudson, "(1) our desire for self-expression, (2) Our interest in people and their doings, (3) Our interest in the world of reality in which we live and (4) Our love of form as form". (Hudson 2003: p11) So we can say that literature deals with life and the course of its action. We are fond of telling others about the things we have seen or imagined, hence the literature of description and it is very natural that we many a time narrate examples from our own life to convey ideas properly. Self-narration is the habit of human beings since many centuries. The four impulses quoted above reveal the same. Autobiography throughout the world has the same thread.

Dalit autobiography revolutionized the very form and adds into it some new aspects of life, which makes it different from traditional autobiography. Dalit Autobiography like the Blacks is a quest for identity. It is the life story of Dalits and their struggle against Hindu hegemony. It is not only the chronicle of a writer's life but

also a vast panorama of the entire Dalit Community in India. As Dalit Autobiography is the next development of the traditional autobiography, it is similar in some aspects but differs in many ways. Therefore first of all we have to study the traditional form of autobiography to compare and contrast it with Dalit Autobiography.

Autobiography as a Genre:

To understand the concept of autobiography, first of all, it is necessary here to study Biography. Dryden defined Biography as "the history of particular men's life" (Prasad 1953: p167) According to Concise Oxford Dictionary, Biography is defined as, "(i) a written account of a person's life usually written by another. (ii) Such writing is a branch of literature". (Fowler 1999)Harald Nicolson has defined it as, "The Biography is a truthful record of an individual, composed as a work of art. (Prasad 1953: p168) From these definitions, biography is considered to be a life sketch of a person written by another person. It narrates events of a person from birth to death. It is the study of one's achievements and personality. On the other autobiography is a narration of one's own life and time. Author himself writes about his achievements and past deeds.

"The term 'autobiography' is commonly thought to have been coined by the nineteenth century poet Robert Southey in 1899... however; there is evidence of slightly earlier usage, at the end of the eighteenth century, in a review attributed to William Taylor." (Anderson 2007: p7) According to Felicity Nassbaum the word autobiography had become a matter of established usage by 1830s. An autobiography is the oldest as well as important personal genre of literary writings. Commonly autobiographies are considered as truthful and authentic. Therefore the chief element of autobiography is its truthfulness. "An autobiography is primarily subjective document, a confessional narrative in which the reader can

see an objective structure of experience" (Singh 2013: p18) It is not fictional like other genres, because the author inevitably has to narrate his own life chronologically. Autobiography according to Concise Oxford Dictionary is "*A personal account of one's life*". (Fowler, 1999) According to Encyclopedia Britannica, "Autobiography is the account of an individual human life written by the subject himself." (Bhalerao 1986: p15) Bijay Kumar Das defined "Autobiography as a genre of literature is a metaphor of the self and it's a journey on the part of the autobiographer from the known to the unknown. It can be taken as an attempt to find an objective correlative for the self. (Das 2003: p131) On the basis of these definitions, it could be assumed that autobiography in general focuses on the life and times of the writer and his own achievement. It reflects the author's life like a mirror. Its chief aim is the successful representation of a personality and depicts the period to which the author belongs. It's as a scientist who observes a slide of an object under a microscope; similarly, the autobiographer too sees his own life as a detached observer. He selects some events of his life through which his personality is developed and or affects the description of the author's inner life as well as his public career.

Prof. Linda Anderson found that the autobiographies equipped with the higher functions, therefore it is equated with the developmental narrative which orders both time and personality according to the purpose and the goal. So for her the looser, more chronological structures of the journal or diary could no longer fulfill higher functions of autobiography. She further commented upon the basis and the goal of the autobiography:

> "The writing and rewriting of self over a period of time, through constant revisions or serial modes, which was common across a range of autobiographical forms and writers

> before the nineteenth century, confounds the notions that there is one definitive or fixed version. What we must take account of, therefore, is the way a developmental version of the self, which is also socially and historically specific, has come to provide a way of interpreting history of the genre: all autobiography, according to this universalizing and prescriptive view, is tending towards a goal, the fulfillment of this one achieved version of self." (Anderson 2007: p9)

If one traces the history of an English autobiography, it is seen that the earliest autobiography was written by St. Augustine. His *Confession* (5th century A.D.) is a frank and full analysis of his life. The best of the autobiographies are Rousseau's *Confession* in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and other famous autobiographers are that of David Hume, Edward Gibbson, Benjamin Franklin, Leigh Hunt, J.S. Mill, John Ruskin, H.G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling and Winston Churchill etc. Similarly, some Black autobiographers written by Fredrick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Langston Huges, Richard Wright, Zora Neal Hurstone, Toi Derricote, Rosemary L. Bray, Estella Conwill Majoro, Ernest Gaines etc. hold an important position in the literary circles.

Autobiography as the Text of Oppressed

Afro-American's autobiography as a subgenre in American literature brought Socio-Cultural issues of the marginalized in front. The Socio-Cultural and Political identity of this group of people becomes the subject of the autobiography. Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith have argued that "the marginalized object, by deploying autobiographical practices that go against the gran can constitute an "I" that becomes a place of creative and by implication, political intervention." (Anderson 2007: p103) On the other hand, according to Swindells, Autobiography has the potential to be the text of the oppressed and the marginalized, forging the right for both and beyond the individual. The writers

here speak out the plight they are in and narrate the experiences in the state of oppression which help in forging an identity. Hence, some writers found it as politicizing the "self". Therefore, according to Anderson, "autobiography becomes both a way of testifying to oppression and empowering the subject through their cultural inscription and recognition." (Anderson 2007: p104) Like Afro-Americans, Dalits were also not the subject of mainstream literature; they were seen as the object. Autobiography becomes their subject of "self" and medium of creativity. Right to "live and grow" is the chief concern of Black Americans autobiography. At the same time it gives way to narration of the marginalized group as a whole, keeping an individual as the essential part. Therefore, Black Autobiography represents the whole oppressed community.

Traces of Autobiographical Narratives in Buddhism

In India, Mahatma Gandhi's *My Experiment with Truth* and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's *My Autobiography* are most famous autobiographies of the last century. Beside these two excellent pieces, India also has a rich history of the development of Autobiography since centuries. The traces of the autobiographical writings are found in ancient and medieval India. Buddhist literary canon is the biggest in the world. *Therigatha* and *Theragatha* come under Khuduk Nikaya of Sutta Pitaka. *Theragatha* and *Therigatha* could be considered as the first autobiographical elements by Buddhist Bhikkus and Bhikkunis. Both the books are written in first person narration. Vimalkirti L. G. Meshram, in preface to his book '*Thergatha*' writes:

> "Therigatha has self-narratives of Arhat (enlighted) Bhikkhunis and Thergatha has self-narratives of Arhat Bhikkhus, were all contemporaries of Lord Buddha. All these Bhikkhus learnt Dhamma from Buddha and achieved their life goals. Thergatha has about 300 self-narratives of Arhat

> Bikkhus containing about 1283 gathas (stanzas). In a way Thergathas are the natural Udan (utterance) or simple expressions of Bhikkhus who lead their life according to Buddha." (Vimalakirti 2005: p4)

Other important autobiographical pieces are the inscriptions of Emperor Asoka, on the rocks and stone pillars. All these inscriptions reveal the story of Asoka's conversion and propagation of Buddhism, which co-incidentally is the story of his life and the reign. These edicts also reveal the story as to how the thoughts and Dhamma work of Emperor Asoka transformed Buddha Dhamma into one of the greatest religions of the world. All these inscriptions are written in first person. All the pillar edicts reveal the character of Emperor Asoka.

In the later period, great Buddhist scholar and famous Sanskrit poet playwright Ashvaghosha gave a brief sketch of his life through his plays *Sutralankara* and *Buddha Charita*. Banabhatta's life sketch in *Harshcharita* is also an important autobiographical piece. The book is based on the life of Harshvardhana. In the first two and a half chapters of this autobiographical work, Banabhatta gives an elaborate description of his own life story in third person narration.

Autobiography in Medieval and Modern Times in India

In the Medieval period of India, Muslim Kings had written their autobiographical pieces mostly in Persian. The first compact autobiographical fragment worth considering is *Fatuhat-I-Firoz-shahi* of Firoz Tughlaq. Firoz Shah ascended the throne of Delhi in 1351 A.D. He had written that he was son of Rajab who was a slave of Muhammad Shah, the King of Delhi. He asserts that god has assigned him the duty of Kingship in order to maintain the laws of his religion i.e. Islam.

The next important autobiographical documents to mention are Babur-Nama or *Tuzuk-I-Baburi* written in Turki, Babur's native language, Muhammed Haider Dughlat's *Trikh-I-Rashidi* and Al Badoni's *Mantakhabi-I-Tawarik*.

An autobiography in English in India is the direct outcome of the influence of the Westerners. The first to write his full autobiography in English was Lutfullah. He wrote the book in 1854 and got it published in 1857. In the nineteenth century, some other autobiographies were also published i.e. Rakhal Dasa Halder's *The English Diary of an Indian Student* and *The Diary of Raja of Kol Rapoor* written during his visit to Europe in 1870.

Ardha Kathana (1601) by Banarasidas was the first known autobiography written in Hindi. Nineteenth century onwards autobiographies were written in Hindi only. There is an autobiography in Hindi written by Seetaram, a retired Indian Army man, translated by Lt. Col. Norgate in English that was published in 1873 under the title *From Sepoy to Subedar*. Twentieth century saw the dawn of an era, which presented a fertile ground for autobiographical writings. Nishikanta Challopadhyaya's *Reminiscences of German University Life* (1909), Lala Lajpat Rai's *The Story of my Deportation* (1908), Banga Chandra Roy's *The Story of My Life* (1913), Bindra Kumar Ghore's *The Tale of My Exile* (1922), Dan Gopal Mukherji's *Caste and Outcaste* (1923), Bipin Chandra Pal's *My Life and Times* (1932), P.C. Ray's *Life and Experiences of Bangali Chemist* (1937), Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's *My Search for Truth* (1937) and in 1946, three autobiographical works were published by Mulk Raj Anand, *Apology for Heroism, A Brief Autobiography of Ideas*, and *My Reminiscences and Recollection and Reflection*.

In the last half of the twentieth century there are plenty of autobiographies published in almost all the Indian languages. Many writers gave way to their emotions and personal history in their autobiographies.

Dalit Autobiography:

Dalit Autobiography also developed with other genres of Dalit Literature in the last four-five decades of the 21st century. It covers life of Dalits who were crushed under the typical Indian social hierarchy. "This is the genre that is focused on an individual. It deals with his or her experiences, personality and feelings." (Satyanarayana 2013: p18)Thus they acted as a mirror of the entire Dalit Community and revealed to the world the untold, unreserved and undisclosed Dalit lives. Waman Nimbalkar says about Dalit Autobiography, "The autobiographies in Dalit literature are a record of Dalit Cultural Revolution. These are the graphs of Dalit pain and agony." (Nimbalkar 2006: p137) The revelation of the life of Dalit through autobiographies is painful, profound and sensitive. The various events of insult, exploitation, hunger and tortures of Dalits in all such Dalit autobiographies force readers of all strata to contemplate.

Dalit Autobiography not only gave an account of a Dalit's life, but also depicted the story of agonies of the entire community and their struggle for Human Rights. Therefore, "their agenda is not localized in individualism but links the individual to his entire caste or community as a way of gaining power and support in a group struggle against similarly experienced oppression." (Beth, 2006)

This kind of an autobiography is known as "Dalit Swa-Kathan" i.e. self-Narratives of Dalits. Arati Kulkarni defines self-narrative as, "A self-narrative is an autobiography written with the latent motive of bringing about the psychological

awakening and transformation of one self and one's community yet written in a literary style". (Kulkarni 1991: p33)

In Marathi "self-narratives" (Swa-Kathane) or Ambedkarite self-narratives as a term is in vogue presently. In Marathi, meaning of the term autobiography is "Atmakatha". 'Atman' means soul. Dalit thinkers and writers have denied its existence. Dr. Yashwant Manohar writes:

> "The word 'atman' (soul) comes with shameful and false ideology 'Karmavipaka' of confusion ... by the thought of atman, typical Indian tradition has weaved a strange structure which is unequal. This poisonous web of thought of exploitation cannot be found anywhere in the world. The word atman is central foundation of Dalits exploitation to be related with self-narrative of Dalit means to spoil the Dalits inspiration of atheism. Therefore the word Swa-kathan (self-narrative) will be suitable to the writings of Dalit which are based on experience". (Manohar 1989)

Dr. Ambedkar did not write his full autobiography. According to his personal assistant Nanak Chand Rattu, Dr. Ambedkar agreed to write his own autobiography. So he started giving dictation to Rattu. His sudden demise in 1956 sealed the work of the autobiography after dictating a few pages. During his lifetime, Dr. Ambedkar had written six important events of his life under the title 'Waiting for Visa' which had great effect on his personality. These six stories in his own handwriting were published by the Government of Maharashtra in Vol. 12 *of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*. These stories are the real painful stories of his life, which shed light on untouchability and contemporary social scenario. Also his autobiographical essay titled "*My Life*" in his periodical *Janata* was published on 6th November 1954. So the impulse to write Dalit Autobiographies could be thus traced back to the chief

protagonist and inspirer of Dalit Literary Movement, Dr. Ambedkar.

Dalit Autobiography in Marathi:

In the year 1948, cricketer Vitthal Babaji Palvankar, a Dalit, published his autobiography under the title *Kridajiwa*'. But this has very scanty description of Dalit life. It also lacked in it Dalit Consciousness (Chetana). In 1974, another autobiography was published by S. N. Suryavanshi who was a Mahar turned into a Christian complaining about the ill treatment from Hindus even after converting to Christianity. But real Dalit Consciousness (Chetana) was found in an article published in a yearly magazine of Milind College, Aurangabad. In 1964, P. I. Sonkamble had written an autobiographical essay *Vatadya.* This was a real instance of Dalit Autobiography to be written in its real spirit. Later in 1979, P. I. Sonkamble published his complete autobiography under the title *Aathavaninche Pakshi.* Daya Pawar's *Baluta*, was published in the year 1978, a year before *Aathavaninche Pakshi.* In the development of Dalit Autobiography, *Ashmitadarsh* a monthly magazine published from Aurangabad played an important role. Along with all the other genres, it published many autobiographical essays, which gave a prominent platform to Dalit writers in Marathi and Hindi.

In Maharashtra after *Aathavaninche Pakshi*, there is a series of Dalit Autobiographies that were published one after another. All these autobiographies appeared with different experiences of atrocities and pain in different regions of Maharashtra. Laxaman Mane's *Upara* (1980), Shankarrao Kharat's *Taral Antral* (1881), Nanasaheb Zodge's *Phanjar* (1982), Dadasaheb Malhari's *Gabal* (1983), Rustam Achalkham's *Gavaki* (1983), Parth Polke's *Aabharan* (1984), Sharankumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi* (1984), Shrirang Talware's *Dhulpati* (1985), Tushar Bhagyawant's *Kondal*

(1986), L. S. Lokade's *Zola* (1986), Pandurang Jadhav's *Marhuda* (1986), Bhimrao Gasti's *Berad* (1987), Laxaman Gaikwas's *Uchalya* (1987), Atmaram Rathod's *Tanda* (1990), N. M. Shinde's *Jatila Jat Vairi* (1990), Balasaheb Gaikwad's *Khristi Mahar* (1990), D. S. Sovakhanale's *Marankada* (1993), and Kishor S. Kale's *Kolhatyache Por* (1994) are some distinguished Dalit Autobiographies.

Female Dalit Autobiographers in Marathi:

Women have also revealed their life through such Dalit Autobiographies. Mukta Sarvagaud's *Mitakli Kawade* (1983), Shantabai Kamble's *Majhya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* (1986), Bebi Kamble's *Jin Aamucha* (1986), Janabai Kacharu Girhe's *Marankada* (1993), Najubai Gavit's *Aador*, Kumud Pawade's *Antasphot*, Mallika Amershekh's *Mala Udhwasth Vhayachaya* etc. All these female writers write in Marathi. Besides Marathi, Bama's *Karakku* in Tamil, Kaushalya Besantris *DoharaAbhishyap* in Hindi, and Banchit Kaur's *Pagadandiyan* in Punjabi, Baby Haldhar's *Aalo Andhari*, in Bengali etc. equally manifest Dalit Consciousness.

Dalit Autobiographies in Hindi and other Languages:

Some Dalit Autobiographies saw the light of the day in the last decades of the 20th century. In Hindi Mohandas Neimishray's *Apne Apane Pinjare* in two volumes (1995), Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* (1997), Surajpal Chauhan's *Tiraskrut* (2002), Bhagwan Das's *Main Bhangi Hun*, and Mata Prasad's *Jopadi se Rajbhawan*, are following the Marathi Dalit Autobiography in all its spirit. Dalit Autobiographies in Marathi have been translated into Hindi.

Three autobiographies that were published in English are Prof. Shyamalal's *Untold Story of a Bhangi Vice-Chancellor*', Dr. D.R. Jatava's *A Silent Soldier* and Shri. Hajari's *I was an Outcaste Indian*.Punjabi Dalit writers are also inspired by Marathi Dalit Autobiographies. Prem

Gorkhi's *Gair Hajir Aadami* (1994), Lalsingh Dil's *Dastan* (1998), and Balvir Madhopuri's *Chhangya Rukkha* (2002) presents chronicles of Punjabi Dalit life. Two autobiographies have been published in Gujarati i.e. B. Keshar Shivam's *Purna Satya* and Lalit Parmar's *Meri Aatmakatha*.

Comparing Traditional and Dalit Autobiography:

Dalit Autobiography i.e. the self-narrative of a Dalit is certainly different from traditional autobiography. In an autobiography the author contemplates over his past life and achievements as a detached observer. Here, one's own life is the central focus, whereas in Dalit Autobiography the entire society is the Centre of focus rather than an individual. In an autobiography, the author reveals his life truthfully and that is a source of catharsis. But a Dalit Autobiographers explore his own and his community's life, and tries to find the answer to their oddities. The impulse behind traditional autobiography is simply to explore mystery around an author, but the impulse behind Dalit self-narrative is to put Dalits social life on national canvas, so that Dalits may inspire and awaken, the non Dalits or upper caste people who may think and contemplate the brutalities done to Dalits in the name of caste and untouchability. Autobiography writers usually write their life at a ripened age. Sometimes these people are famous and powerful. On the contrary, Dalit Autobiographers are very young, not famous or powerful, not even settled in career. In case of traditional autobiographers, they become conscious of their status and position, therefore they employ statements and words carefully. Whereas young Dalit Autobiographers are straightforward and carefree about their own status and reveal all things of their life and community without any hesitation, traditional autobiographies unfold the riddle and suspense about author's life, but Dalit Autobiographies

unfold the entire life of Dalit Community and expose Hindu hegemony and hollowness of the typical Indian social hierarchy. To restore Dalit self-pride and human values are the recurrent motifs in all Dalit Autobiographies.

Primary Sources and Writers for the study

Seven Autobiographies have been taken into consideration for study in this chapter of the research,

1. **Daya Pawar's *Baluta* (1978)** translated into English as '*Baluta*' (2015)
2. **Sharankumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi* (1984)** translated as 'The Outcaste' (2003)
3. **Shantabai Krishnaji Kamble's *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* (1988)** translated in parts as 'Kaleidoscopic Story of My Life' (2006)
4. **Vasant Moon's *Vasti* (1995)** translated as 'Growing Up Untouchable in India'(2001)
5. **Dr. Narendra Jadhav's *Amacha Baap Aan Amhi* (1993)** republished into English as ' Outcaste: A Memoir'(2003)
6. **Urmila Pawar's *Aaidan* (2003)** translated as 'The Weave of My Life' (2009).
7. **D. R. Jatava's A Silent Soldier An Autobiography (1999)**
8. **Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* (1997)** translated as 'Joothan: A Dalit's Life'

First six autobiographies are originally written in Marathi and all these six writers are from Maharashtra and belonged to Mahar community. Last two writers are from Uttar Pradesh. D. R. Jatava belonged to a shoemaker's community while Omprakash Valmiki belonged to a sweeper community. The common thread of these eight writers' life is the influence of Dr. Ambedkar, the Conversion of 1956 and Buddhism. The former identity of the Community is mentioned here only to draw a graph of forging identity from

a marginalised community into a Community of Pride with Buddhism. Most of the writers taken for the study developed acquaintance with Dr. Ambedkar's Movement personally or through the family much earlier to the Conversion of 1956.

Since Dalit writers indulged in portraying Dalit's life through the subtle description of injustice, insult, oppression, at the hands of upper caste Hindus and the terrible plight of theirs in utter poverty and hunger, left little space to linger on philosophy. Influence of Buddhism brought a sea change into the life of these people, yet in the autobiography it appears in the aspect of Changing Community, therefore, being to Becoming remains the prime object and element of Buddhism that becomes unintentional but essential object in these autobiographies. These autobiographies emphasise more on venting way to their inner oppressed mind and sufferings borne by their community. Dr. Ambedkar's entry into the life of Dalits begins the story of transformation of these poor communities into a rich tradition. That was the turning point by the entry of rationalism and inculcation of Human Values in their lives. The elements of Buddhism proposed for the study in this chapter are scattered in all these texts not necessarily occurred in single. The selection of order is arbitrary on the basis of force in convened thoughts.

Dukkha i.e. Suffering and the Theory of Cause and Effect

Dukkha is the first Noble truth Buddha claimed. Besides birth, death and illness, Dalits suffering is mainly a cause of discrimination and atrocities at the hands of the upper caste people under the structured social order. They are left to ponder in poverty and in dehumanised state intentionally. The structured social order systematically denied the all-round growth and happiness of these Dalits. Therefore, Dalit's sufferings are based on the Socio-

Economic and Cultural and particularly on the Psychological levels. The life depicted in Dalit Autobiographies is full of sufferings of poverty, hunger, discrimination, marginality and hatred. Denial of humanism and self-respect is a mental torture. The sufferings depicted in the Dalit Autobiographies are multifaceted. Introduction to Buddhism through Dr. Ambedkar brought to Dalit writers a clear understanding about the same.

Sharankumar Limbale's suffering has may faces, being *Akkarmashi* (term used to indicate impure in case of gold) was the one and foremost, he was born to a Mahar community woman through her illicit relationship with the upper caste Patil. So he suffered discrimination as an untouchable who experienced poverty, hunger and severe identity crisis that has no parallel. The images of poverty and hunger in the text speaks the story of his and his family's sufferings : "My stomach was like a way to the graveyard that continuously swallows the dead...the teacher asked the high-caste boys and girls to collect the leftovers on a piece of paper and give it to us. I and Purshya carried the bundle of leftover food on the way back." (Limbale 2005: pp4-5)

Earning food for these Mahar poor families was very difficult. Therefore, to feed the family members grandmother of Limbale during harvest time used to gather undigested grains from cow dung and made *Bhakaris* from it. The struggle to get grains and then making *Bhakaris* from it brought sufferings to her. She had to roam in the village and adjacent agricultural farm for such dung and haystacks, dry leaves and twigs to kindle clay stove to make *bhakaris.* Limbale maintained, "Santamai would get up after grinding the jowar. As she roamed the fields and open lands, sufferings from constant exposure to the sun, her skin was wizened and dry. Supressing hunger had become a habit with her."(Limbale 2005: p10). Many a times Limbale's

family slept without having food: "starvation was written in our lot from the moment of our birth. Most of the time all my sisters went to sleep without eating anything. Nobody woke them up for dinner, because there was nothing to eat...mother gulped water only. Dada satisfied his hunger by smoking bidies."(Limbale 2005: p 21)

Vasant Moon also recounts hard days of poverty and hunger of his family in his autobiography: "...now our days of hunger began. We started going hungry for two days at a time. At first we were troubled by pangs of starvation. However, once the body gets in the habit of fasting, hunger is not felt. Hunger slowly begins to die. With it, the flowing spirit begins to dry up, free laughter vanishes. We began to put whatever we could get into our stomachs." (Moon 2002: p75)

Dr. Jatava became fatherless when he was a child. The death brought all round difficulties to the Jatava family. Though he suffers, Dr. Jatava nonetheless understood that death is inevitable, thus realising the Law of Kamma. : "As a result of my father's death, there was poverty, deprivation, all around. One can curse death, but he cannot defeat it. For it is a law of nature without anyone knowing when it will come; but it is sure that death will come." (Jatava 1999: p4) He further mentioned that: "the cruel law of nature had left us on the roads to work for our livelihood." (Jatava 1999: p10)

Dr. Jatava married when he was eleven years of age and his wife was nine years old only. Being a child, the marriage rituals were very strenuous to him as a consequence he suffered high fever during marriage ceremony: "I remember, at the time of marriage ceremony in the Mandap, a marriage pavilion, I had developed high fever because of strenuous and cumbersome marriage Sanskars, the religious rites. It

was quite a strange exercise for me. I did not enjoy it, then."(Jatava 1999: p7)

Omprakash Valmiki's eldest brother Sukhbir was the only source of family earning. He was brave and courageous. Once he drove out the wild boar with the small stick in his hand. His untimely death left the family shattered and to the condition of hopelessness. Valmiki writes:

> "One day when he returned from work, his body was hot with fever. He was in bed for a week. He died without proper medication or treatment. It was as though lightening had struck our family. Everything had shattered. Pitaji was totally broken by this tragedy. Ma was so overwhelmed by Sukhabir's death that she would faint at short intervals. Bhabi had become a widow at a very young age. Our family's condition that had been improving because of my brother now took a turn for the worse."(Valmiki 2003: p12)

Valmiki was deputed in Chandrapur (Maharashtra) Ordinance Factory when he got news of his mother's illness. He returned to his village to see her. He felt terribly bad when he saw his mother ageing and she was at her death bed: "I was much shaken looking at her condition. Something somewhere was slipping away from my grasp and scattering like sand." (Valmiki 2003: pp 110-111) He lost his mother and then soon he lost his father as well. He suffered much with their death but his agony was intensified more because he was not able to attend their funerals as he received the news later every time. He expresses his grief as "I hadn't been granted the privilege to carry Ma's bier and Pitaji's biers. He whom they had struggled so hard to make something of had become so distanced from them. It is grief that I hide deep inside my heart."(Valmiki 2003: p111)

Woman in the Indian patriarchal society is dominated by her male counterpart. She leaves her parents' home to spend her entire life with the unknown man and his family.

Leaving her parents' home is the cause of suffering which was emotionally mentioned by Jadhav's grandmother to his mother Sonu when her marriage was fixed. "She had tears in her eyes and drew me close, patting my back, 'poor lass, what can I do? We have the curse of being born a female. I went through all the suffering and now I have to see you go through it. That's why they say, never beget a daughter."(Jadhav 2003: p77)

The concluding part of Urmila Pawar's autobiography *The Weave of my Life* is burdened with the narration of sufferings and agony as the writer lost one after another her dear ones from her life. A specific coincidence is mentioned by her in this autobiography where she gave advice to Chandrika Ramteke to recover from the grief of her departed young son a few days ago and loses her own son in a train accident. Here Pawar expresses her terrible grief as:

> "Life had a brutal shock, similar to the kind of Chandrika Ramteke had faced, in stored for me as well. When the tragedy struck me, my grief and agony knew no bounds! It engulfed me completely, like boiling lava out of an exploding volcano, reducing all my emotions, enthusiasm, plans and hopes to a heap of charred ashes! The words I wrote to Chandrika came back to me with vengeance!"(Pawar 2003: p 296)

She was hardly regained from this grief when she got the news of her brother's death. "When I regained consciousness, I could hardly breathe. Suddenly the memory of Bhai's death leapt up like a flame, scorching me with red-hot agony." (Pawar 2003: p297) these two sudden deaths in short intervals crumbled her a lot making her an introvert and contemplating over the suffered character in Buddhist history. The story of Kisa Gautami who lost her everything was translated by Pawar that later helped her

realise the truth of life and cause of human suffering as proclaimed by Buddha.

> "It was terribly difficult sitting alone, by oneself. Pain stung the brain like a scorpion. Then I started to think about new plots, imagine charecters and dialogues. And suddenly I saw in front of me Gautami who had brought the dead body of her son to Tathagata and begged him to make him alieve. The Buddha had asked her to get him some mustard seeds from a house that had not witnessed a death. In a few, well-chosen words, he made her aware of the reality of life. His kind words –and there are many such instances and that of Buddha making compassionate speeches at such times-are together called *Udan*, which bhante Jagdish has translated from Pali into Hindi. I selected these compassionate words of the Budddha for translating into Marathi. I devoted myself to the translation to drown my grief." (Pawar 2003: p299)

The third shock she received was when her brother-in law's daughter Sugandha was diagnosed with both kidney failure and died soon. Another jolt she had to bear before her death her husband Harishchandra's diagnosis of Liver cancer and his death that left her in an agonised state of mind. Her words indicate her realisation of the Four Noble Truths of Buddha, circling around the sufferings in human life:

> "Life has taught me many things; showed me much; it has also lashed out at me till I bled. I do not know how much longer I am going to live; nor do I know in what form life is going to comfort me. Let it come in any form, I am ready to face it stoically. That is what my life has taught me. That is my life, and that is me." (Pawar 2003: p320)

Dalits were left unreasoned to understand the causes of their sufferings. They were culturally trained to realize that their plight was the cause of sins in the past life. They were made to accept their lowest social order for slavery and exploitation justified with the law of religion. Dalits remained

ignorant of their sufferings under socio-cultural set up of the social order. Their ignorance is none other than the avijja as depicted in Buddhism.

Avijja as the Cause of Suffering

Initial cause of the Dalit suffering is also their ignorance about their plight and poverty. It is certain that the state of dehumanisation they were leading was out of caste system, but they would consider it as their karma of past life so they took birth in an untouchable family. Under the religious fear Dalits were ignorant and accepted all the discrimination and marginalisation of upper castes as a result of their karma ofunknown past. The traditions and culture of these communities were highly influenced of this ignorance.

Urmila Pawar's illiterate mother would go to the temples and places which could bless her for having a girl child. It was sheer ignorance of her as writer understood that no god or such Bhats would help her out. Her mother suffered a lot in such ferries to temples. She suffered miscarriages too. "Aai wanted a daughter. After me, a girl was born but she died young. Aai would make all sorts of promises and vows to get daughter. She would go to Sion to propitiate Satvai. A girl was duly born but then my aunt Kaku's sickly daughter died. The blame was put on Aai." (Pawar 2003: p26)

Dr. R. Jatava's family was also under such ignorance as to marry their children before even they reached puberty. "The marriage of a girl before puberty was regarded traditionally as pious event of moral and religious significance. It would earn merit to the parents in the future birth. This way the children were entrapped into conjugal relationships at the earliest possible opportunity." (Jatava 1999: p7)

Jatava narrates another incidence in his autobiography about the fire crackers in a marriage party. The negligence of

the person in handling those fire crackers proved fatal to himself. Fireworks in marriage party: "another young member of marriage party hastily took out a country-bomb and when he was about to display it, he started smoking bidi, its sparkle caused bursting of the country bomb in his right hand itself. The man was badly injured, his face was disfigured.

Daya Pawar narrates an incident of the village where many woman act as exorcists. These women remain in ignorance in their life and claimed that they are possessed by Gods of ghosts. They found pride in them for spelling gods wish. But these acts of possession were unreal which meant insult of womanhood.

> "Once Dada went with his friend Satva to a wedding. They were well known in the area as exorcists. One of the women in the wedding party was possessed. Her hair lashed her koonkoo-smeared forehead as she spun round and round...the woman began to act even more wildly. Whiling she snarled: he called me a mother fucker. Satva replied in the same tone: tell him to go back. This is a spirit from your own home. The wedding party was laughing uproariously. When Dada began to belabour the woman's buttocks with a thorny branch, the possession ceased." (Pawar 2015: p34)

Limbale's great granny loved cats and kept them as her pet. But this pet love of hers usually brought quarrel amongst the family members. Therefore once she decided to desert the cat. She gave the job to young Sharan. "Chandamai gave me ten paise as a tip for the job while warning me, 'never kill a cat. It is a sin; you will have to visit Kashi to wash your sins away." It was her ignorance through the tradition handed down to her that those sins were washed in Kashi.

Omprakash Valmiki's community were having beliefs in sprits and ghosts under high ignorance. They preferred Bhagats to cure patient instead of a Doctor.

> "The whole basti had a strange idea about ghosts and spirits. If anybody fell sick just a bit, a Bhagat would be called instead of a doctor. After the god or the goddesses had taken possession of the sorcerer, the sick person would be brought to him. Often this sorcerer possessed by the god would talk about the influence of some ghost or spirit and would act as though he were catching it. In exchange, the gods and the goddesses are offered pigs, roosters, rams, and liquor. These deities were worshiped in every house." (Valmiki 2003: p26)

According to Buddha one has to understand the various sources of one's suffering. Realisation of the suffering helps understand its causes. Buddha gives way to overcome one's grief and sufferings by proposing the Noble Eightfold Path. Since Dalits suffering was because of the unjust social order therefore, there was no option but to come out of that labyrinth. Why Dalits support Dr. Ambedkar's call for Conversion into Buddhism is because it set them free from mental slavery. Dalit Autobiographies are the cases of writers' realisation of their plight in that unjust social order. The narration of their sufferings was just the understanding of their sufferings and finally revolting against the forced causes for their ultimate liberty with the Conversion.

Noble Eightfold Path:
Wisdom (Panna)

Right View (Samma Ditthi) and Right Thought (Samma Sankappo) together form the Wisdom. According to Dr. Gangadhar Pantavne, "Wisdom is the vision of life. It is the intense wish to end the conflict between rationalism and knowledge. It also doesn't dwell in the realm of mystery and imaginary states of life. It only found in the welfare and happiness of living beings." (Pantavne, 2010: p16) Dr.

Ambedkar's Movement of Dalit emancipation was based on rationalism. Dalits were realising the fruitless religious cultures and superstitions woven to enslave them. Right view brought Revolutionary changes in the lifestyle of the Dalits, especially after the Conversion, it helped them improve the standard of living. Generation of Dalit community which come in direct influence of Mahatma Phule and Dr. Ambedkar developed the right thought to give away the age old unjust and illogical beliefs, educate the coming generation to improve their Socio-Economic position of the community, and to adopt new practices of Buddhism for the Development of Culture and Psyche for Self-respect and Pride.

An incidence depicted by Shantabai Kamble in her autobiography *The Kaleidoscopic Story of My Life* about the meeting of her husband as a school boy who had accompanied one teacher to meet Dr. Ambedkar. The incidence remains indelible in the mind of her husband throughout his life. Dr. Ambedkar heard about one educated Mahar woman who had applied for a sweepers job that to in the lanes of Brahmins so that she could get Bhakris. This was disgusting for him. He expressed his anger to his party men in village "just look at this application. We strive hard day and night to improve and develop our community, we organise meetings, fight for them. But this application makes it very clear what it all amounts to" (Rege 2006: p185) Dr. Ambedkar was against the jobs which were attached with Dalits enslavement. According to him educated people should strive for better occupations so that the status of family as well as their community improved. Here Dr. Ambedkar's expectation from his fellow brothers was indicative of the right thought.

Shantabai's parents working hard to give right education to their daughter was the right thought. She mentioned their

intentions as, "to my Aaye-Appa (Mother and Father) who worked the entire day in the hot glaring sun, hungry and without water, and through the drudgery of labour, with hunger pinching their stomach, educated me and brought me from darkness into light" (Rege 2006: pp156-157) her mother constantly telling her importance of education, according to her mother, "for only then would better days come her way" (Rege 2006: p157) Not only this but when her mother learned that Shantabai bunked the school for eight days along with her friends and accompanied them in the field, she was infuriated. Shantabai was beaten by her mother, but after that incidence, she never bunked the school. Later her mother fell ill and she was on her death bed. Realising her death near, she took promise from her husband that he would allow their daughter to complete her education and marry her to a school teacher only. It was her mother's right thought for her daughter that made Shantabai a school teacher and brought better days as well as identity for the family.

Right View as one of the path of Noble Eightfold Path was practiced by Jatava's father. He knew that the poverty of their family wouldn't go unless his son gets good education. "the father's most ardent longing was to help me to rise in life for a good career in order to keep me away from the harsh realities like cleansing the dusty roads for food grains to be brought by farmers in their bullock-carts to the markets" (Jatava 1999: p3) Jatava got married when he was eleven but he was clear about the values even at that tender age. In his community consumption of liquor was quite normal but it brought many problems to all. Jatava gives it a right thought, "the drinking of liquor by either side seems to be usual, but it creates unpleasant situation. It is bad, and must be avoided by both parties, if they wish to ensure a peaceful marriage event." (Jatava 1999: p7) Jatava wanted to

learn but his widowed mother was unable to pay his school fees. Therefore, he decided to earn while he was learning. He maintained: "however, it was an impetus to me and I caught the idea firmly that I must do something for my education and also help my mother in our livelihood. My passion for education yielded good results." (Jatava 1999: p9) Jatava on a number of occasions shows his Wisdom which helped him grow and earn his own identity.

Damu, the father of Narendra Jadhav was involved in the Dalit Movement under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar. He punctually attended the meetings and calls of his committee. Dr. Ambedkar's Wisdom transformed the understanding of contemporary people. The extract from the notes of Jadhav's father is noteworthy here. The entire community was enchanted by Dr. Ambedkar's speeches and developed right understanding and Samma Sankappo. He remembers works of Dr. Ambedkar "Educate, Unite, and Agitate, was the slogan chanted at Babasaheb Ambedkar's rally that day. I felt excitement run through my veins with the potent energy of the movement. I was instantly taken with Babasaheb's persona and sensed we untouchables had finally found a saviour. Before I realised it, I had been drawn into the vortex of the social movement." (Jadhav 2003: p 21)

Dr. Ambedkar's call for Conversion to Buddhism was highly supported by Mahar Dalits. Damu being a hardcore follower of Dr. Ambedkar also wanted to embrace Buddhism. He wanted to convince his wife Sonu reflects his right vision (Samma Ditthi) which is a kind of Wisdom: "I want my children to grow up and have a dignified life. I want them to be respected and I am sending them to school just as Babasaheb has said...and if they remain Hindus; they will always be treated as inferior. They will never have

respectable place in society. I will see to it that my children don't have to suffer like we have."(Jadhav 2003: p174)

Omprakash Valmiki's father was a man of strength and right thoughts. It was the time when Valmiki community would not send their children to schools instead they were sent to perform traditional work. He thought and said to Omprakash Valmiki that "You have to improve the caste by studying." (Valmiki 2003: p29) he was alert and conscious all the time about his son getting right education. He would pick-up any tussle with anybody who tried to create obstacle in his son's education.

Another incidence related to Omprakash Valmiki himself when he was studing in DAV College. One of his friends Hemlal handed him a book on Dr. Ambedkar. Knowledge about Dr. Ambedkar's life and his works gives a meaning to his own thoughts. He maintained:

> "The further I went into the book, I felt as though a new chapter about life was being unfurled before me. A chapter about which I had known nothing. Dr. Ambedkar's life long struggle had shaken me up. I spend many days and nights in great turmoil. The restlessness inside me had increased. My stone like silence had suddenly begun to melt. I proceeded to read Dr. Ambedkar's entire book that I found in the library."(Valmiki 2003: p72)

In Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life*, she depicted that her husband always had the sense of self-respect that came from his father who attended Dr. Ambedkar's speech where the later appealed the people to leave Mharaki. The right thought (Samma Sankappo) adopted by his father brought a change in coming generations with elevated dignity. She says:

> "Harishchandra was born at a time when Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar went on a whirlwind tour of the Konkan region. Local leaders like Kalsukar, Arulkar, Kirloskar, Hadkar, and

> Hindalekar had organised a huge public meeting for him. In his speech, Babasaheb appealed to the people to give up their traditional caste-specific duties of Mharki and that is what people did. Harischandra's father vowed never to do such duties again. He had spoken of this so many times. This probably was the root of his sense of self-respect." (Pawar 2008: p 159)

Urmila Pawar establishes herself as a writer and earned a name in the literary circle. But she always felt that being a woman she was dependant on men for organising programmes. When her writer friend Hira Bansode proposed to form an organisation for woman, Urmila Pawar immediately proposed to form Dalit Mahila Sahitya Snaghatana (Dalit Woman's Literary Organisation) it was the right sankappo by these two writers to create a platform for Dalit women. Soon the thought was materialised.

In his autobiography *Growing up Untouchables of India,* Vasant Moon, depicted character of his grandfather who had influence of Europeans. So he wanted her grandson to adopt European life style and become officer. He often says: "Vasanta should not even get dust on his feet. He will be a sahib." (Moon 2002: p10)

In *Baluta,* Daya Pawar mentioned an incidence from his childhood days. His father was a drunkard and used to consume even spirit and industrial alcohol. Daya found it utterly foolish of his father. He maintains: "I can still remember the smell of spirit; it settles in my nose as a child. This was truly a poison. Dada would present a comic sight, screwing up his face into different shapes as he forced it down as quickly as possible. Why drink it if it tastes so horrible, I would wonder. It would have been a miracle if it hadn't corroded his intestines in a year or so." (Pawar 2015: p24) Here Daya Pawar seems to have developed a right view about one's life.

Daya Pawar depicted a personality in *Baluta* named Ranuji Kasabe who was bold and courageous and did not hesitate to ask intelligent questions at gatherings that generally left the audience speechless. He used to participate in Dr. Ambedkar's Movement without fail. He wanted his son to educate. He named his son Raosaheb who later become a professor of Political Science and emerged as a thinker. It was right thought of Ranuji Kasabe which made his son an educated intellectual.

The Moral Code of Conduct (Sila) and The Law of Kamma

Sila is comprised of Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood. Universal Law of Kamma works negatively as well as positively. The results of one's deed could be seen immediately in this life only. The incidence from the life of Shantabai Kamble is noteworthy here when she narrated as to how she suffered miscarriage owing to negligence of her health. "During her pregnancy also Shantabai Kamble had to work in home as well as in school. After Shantabai joined the Atpadi School, her workload increased. She did all the housework in the morning, got the children ready, cooked for all their guests and only then left for work. Often there was no time for her to eat since the children were young and needed attention... (One day) she fell unconscious and a doctor had to be called as she had a miscarriage."(Rege 2006: p176)

Dalit Communities depicted in these autobiographies are hard-working and earn their means of livelihood from lawful occupations. They possess progressive thoughts in the influence of early Dalit movements.

Shantabai Kamble mentioned in her autobiography that after returning from her husband's home she stayed with her father. It was the time when a girl living on her own, was not considered good. But Shatabai's father differentiated his

daughter from the upper caste one and told the inquirer that he would support his daughter and not the ill tradition. Father of Shantabai would say, "If the girl stays on by herself, well and good-or else let her go wherever she wants to-we are not Brahmins you know." (Rege 2006: p164)

Shatabai's father earned his livelihood through rightful means this is called as samma ajio. Even in hard days he never submitted to the easy ways. "During the non-taralki days, Appa, Shantabai's father tended and trained a bull belonging to one of the peasant families. He received enough bhakari to suffice as a meal in return for this labour." (Rege 2006: p173)

To support the family financially Dr. R. Jatava opened a grocery shop which proved fruitful to him. Beside economic help he could support his own education, "I opened a small grocery shop in a room of our home with the help of the amount I got by selling an ornament of my wife. It proved to be a profitable adventure for a small boy like me. I used to sit in the shop during the day and studied in the dim light of the kerosene lamp. I appeared privately in high-school Examination in 1950 from U.P. board of education." (Jatava 1999:p13)

After retirement Jatava adopted work as an advocate. He was contemplating over as to what profession he was going to choose. He maintained:

> "The legal practice is no doubt an independent profession as Dr. Ambedkar had also liked it provided it is carried on with truth and honesty. To make the money out of every case, whether genuine or false, is bad. The cause of justice to parties ought to be the real issue of an advocate. Falsehood and lies cannot do such job. Soon after retirement, I got myself registered as an advocate in Rajasthan Bar Council with a view to doing legal practice."(Jatava 1999: p189)

Sharankumar Limbale's family was engaged in manual labour. "Santamai swept the village streets, went round begging, massaged the bulging stomachs of pregnant women and also worked as midwife. Dada lit the street lamps, worked as porter, distributed newspaper, went to school carrying tiffin for pupils."(Limbale 2005: p53)

Buddhists are followers of the Five Precepts given by Buddha. Consumption of liquor and selling the same is prohibited in this religion. Limbale's mother in-law who was a Buddhist did not allow her daughter to go to Limbale's home after marriage since Limbale's family was engaged in liquor business. She said, "There is no discipline in your house. You sell liquor there. All kinds of people visit you. Our daughter will be spoiled. You may take her when you start working. We won't send our daughter until you are independent." (Limbale 2005: p100)

The Moral Conduct in one's life plays a major role in developing character. The right livelihood is an important element of the Moral Code of Conduct taught by Buddha. Daya Pawar depicted the lawful wage earnings of the men of his community. "The mahar men worked as hamaals or labourers. Some worked in the mills and factories. None of the women observed purdah. How could they? They worked harder than the men...most women gathered discarded paper from the cloth shops of Mangaldas market...other women washed the clothes of the ladies in the brothels. Some of the prostitutes tired of Kheema-pao, would ask them to cook Bajri Bhakris and fiery meat dishes." (Pawar 2015: pp7-8)

Daya Pawars father was a drunkard who died of alcohol. Therefore, the writer did not want to imitate his father's example. So he destroys all those apparatus which killed his father. This attitude of writer shows his right approach

towards developing sound Moral Character. "After dada died, I methodically and carefully smashed his still and all the paraphernalia that went with distilling. I had no use for such an inheritance. In the later life, I never became addicted to alcohol." (Pawar 2015: p 59) Daya Pawar's father was not morally sound man yet the writer develops insight of a good personality right from his childhood. It was due to his exposure of the schooling and influence of his mother. One incident here is noteworthy to understand the development of right understanding of the writer. Daya Pawar's father was a womaniser. Once he took him to a hotel to meet a prostitute there. Pawar understood what was it and he was infuriated. "I may be young but I know what is going on. "If this is what you wanted to do, why bring me along?' I ask him savagely. He smiles himself, as if proud of me. This only angers me further. The woman tries to make up to me, tries to draw me into her arms. I pushed her away." (Pawar 2015: p 25) This incident also narrates the Moral Strength of the writer.

To support his education Vasant Moon did all kinds of odd jobs. He earned his wage with right livelihood. While recollecting his memory of childhood he says, "The idea of somehow being able to earn a few pennies bean to haunt my mind and I started to roam in the lanes. At that time, a sort of "lotion" was used to fix punctures in bicycle tyres. It came in tube like toothpaste of today, but since plastic had not been invented, the tube was made of tin. Once the cycle shops had used the tubes they would throw them away. I collected these tubes and earned a few rupees from selling them. Along with trash, when I was in middle school I made an effort to collect all kinds of goods for sale." (Moon 2002: p51)

Sila i.e. the Moral Code of Conduct is treated as the foundation of Buddhist life. Dalit writers grown up in a very

odd situation, where on one hand they suffered the discrimination and hate from the upper caste people and on the other hand they had to tackle with their own community men engrossed with the bad habits. In such a situation where there is no hope of getting the right path, against all odd, they developed themselves with the influence of Dr. Ambedkar, thereof education and ultimately Buddhism. This was their Strength which not only helped them forged Self-identity but also they helped many of their own community men improve their standard of living.

Samadhi

Samadhi is comprised of Right Efforts, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. The aim of Dr. Ambedkar's Movement was to restore the Human Values for the Dalits and to rehabilitate the dehumanised men under caste system. He had to build up a massive nationwide movement. Therefore, the entire movement concentrated on the liberation of Dalits on socio-political-economic and cultural level from the caste system and finally bringing Buddhism as the rational way of life to improve the standard of living with human values. Therefore, the entire movement led by Dr. Ambedkar put their efforts i.e. Right Effort and Right Concentration on these very goals. Dalit community depicted in Dalit Autobiography was transformed during the period of Dr. Ambedkar's Movement through the Right Effort and Right Concentration towards their goal. In case of creativity, Samadhi is the state of an artist's complete devotion to his creativity. According to Dr. Gangadhar Pantavne:

> "When an artist becomes one with his creativity, he develops Samadhi. A painter stores the beautiful colours from the nature. He observes the various postures of the men and beautiful art takes birth. A dancer's discovery of rhythmic steps is none other than concentration! Inner mind of a poet

> blossomed from the concentration. And what about sculpture! Sculpture from the rock is the contemplation of chitta. That is Samadhi." (Pantavne 2010: p20)

Dr. Pantave further maintained that Samadhi taught by Buddha was the way of Purity of one's nature, Virtues and Kamma. Samyak Samadhi was none other than the breath to human liberty. Freedom from the doubts and confusion was the Right Contemplation. Happy mind brought all achievements. Overcoming from the limitations when good Kamma became active, that was Right Samadhi.

Vasant Moon is a revered name in the Ambedkarite Community who devoted his entire life in editing and compilation of Dr. Ambedkar's writings and speeches from every possible source. It was a mammoth work that required complete concentration and devotion. A person who came from an untouchable and poor background, developed through education aiming at the forging of Identity. Being the professor of Marathi, he brought research in the Marathi circle stimulating the Dalit Literary activities. His autobiography presents the panorama of Dalit community transforming into Ambedkarite Buddhist Community.

Dr. D. R. Jatava, the writer of *Silent Soldier*, is known for the advanced research in Dr. Ambedkar's work. He was the first to earn Ph. D. and D.Lit. in Dr. Ambedkar's writings. From an untouchable community to excel in academics he earned a name in higher education. He was responsible to analyse Dr. Ambedkar Thought and proposing it as a Philosophy. His devotion towards research and Welfare of Dalit community is the central theme of his autobiography.

Inspite of his sufferings and pains of being born out of an illicit relationship and lifelong abuse as an impure, Sharankumar Limbale, the writer of *The Outcaste*, against

all odds educated himself with the support of his grandmother and Dada. He became professor of Marathi, a well-established poet, novelist and critic. His devotion to the development of Dalit Literary Writings and Criticism is noteworthy. He was the first to develop Dalit Aesthetics. Therefore, he had shown his level of contemplation in the autobiography as a narrator of his story.

Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* also brought forward the personality of a writer who developed himself from an unparalleled support and will of his parents. He educated himself and got employment in Ordinance Factory. He devoted himself in the Literary Creativity by writing poetry, stories and also wrote Dalit Aesthetics following the footsteps Dr. Ambedkar.

Dr. Narendra Jadhav is one of the leading Economists of the country today. His autobiography *Outcaste*, narrated the story of his parents and obviously the story of his own and his siblings. From the poor and environment of utter discrimination, the growth of Dr. Jadhav as an Economist and his academic leadership speaks the story of the level of concentration and exercise of contemplation over the development and welfare of his community.

Daya Pawar is another poet and story teller of the Ambedkarite ommunity. His autobiography covers the story of his transformation from a poor family to an established Dalit Writer who earned fellowship of Ford Foundation for writing first Dalit Autobiography. His collection of poetry *Kondawada* exposed the conspiracy of caste system and images of utter poverty and sufferings of Dalits. His writing was devoted to the Ambedkarite Literary Movement.

The stories of Shantabai Kamble's *Kaleidoscopic Story of my Life* and Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of my Life* brought the story of being to Becoming of the two women

who suffered double subjugation. Both the writers had to struggle first from an unjust social structure and on the other patriarchy within the family to be educated and get employment. Both became school teachers and involved themselves in the Dalit Literary Movement to develop women's wing. Concentration and contemplation gave them strength to forge their identity.

Rejection of God, Soul (Anatta) and Acceptance of Rationality

Dalit Converted to Buddhism along with Dr. Ambedkar and took the Twenty Two Vows based on the rejection of their previous illogical beliefs which were responsible for their slavery. After Conversion, Dalit Community was transformed into Buddhist Culture therefore, rejection of old faith was prominently seen in the Dalit Narratives. Shantabai Kamble narrates the change occurred in the village, "After the Dharmantar (conversion of religion, refers to the Dhamma Diksha, conversion to Buddhism of Dr. Ambedkar and his followers) the fairs are mentioned as an event to see rather than ritually participate" (Rege 2006" p161) She herself developed rationality therefore, even as a school going girl she did not enter the temples. "At Pandharpur, while the other children went into the temple, Jalindar and Shantabai paid their respect only to Saint Chokhoba (a mahar saint of Bhakti tradition" (Rege 2006: p170)

Dr. Jatava narrates the base of his post-Doctoral Research which was based on the Social Philosophy of Buddha which rejects the Hindu beliefs. "The D. Litt thesis was in fact, an elaboration of the ideology of Ambedkar Movement. Dr. Ambedkar had taught us that neither fate, nor god, or soul, could save the downtrodden of India. For such ideas did not support man's freedom to change in the present situation, they dictate man to do his duties as

prescribed in varnashram dharma and to wait to be born in the next birth in a family according to karma presently done." (Jatava 1999: p67)

Vasant Moon's grandfather was following the Progressive thought. But some of his friends who liked Vasanta gave him a sacred thread and tonsured his head. Vasanta knew this would certainly offend his grandfather:

> "Then he (Ghadle, friend of Vasanta's grandfather) took me to the barbershop. He instructed the barber to shave my head completely. Only the tuft was left. Grandfather would never have liked this. His thinking was progressive even for his time. No one in our house worshiped gods. No one brought god man to our house. If by chance such people came, they ran away after seeing grandfather. After keeping the sacred thread for eight or ten days I threw it away. At my next haircut Pralhad barber cut off the tuft also." (Moon 2002: p14)

Dr. Ambedkar's influence brought a Revolution in the thought process of the youths of Nagpur who automatically left their old beliefs and followed rationality. Vasant Moon maintained: "The youth read Ambedkar's call in the Janata weekly. There it was written 'the Hindus gods were not brought for us; don't do their puja. Their festivals are not ours; don't observe them' it was possible for the older generation to forsake the entire Hindu culture one by one. Not only this, the youth were conscious that if such an attempt were made all the wrestlers would be against them."(Moon 2002: p43) Wamanrao Godbole, a hard-core Ambedkarite would inspire Dalit youth in Nagpur with his speeches: "We should not travel on the paths of other. We only want to reform our community, our neighbourhood. Before we adopt another religion, we have to wipe out culture of this religion." (Moon 2002: p44)

With the wave of Rationalism under the influence of Dr. Ambedkar, Dalits showed least interest and trust in

superstitions and on the existence of spirits or ghosts. Moon writes: "at nights I couldn't sleep until three or four in the morning. I kept my eyes half opened just so much as a tall tree lets in spots of light through its shadows. However, no such things as a ghost appeared to me. Attababa, Spearman used to roam throught the night in burial grounds. He would say 'I have been wandering for so many years in the cemetery. I have not seen any ghosts, Ghosts are not outside of us, they are in our minds". (Moon 2002: p117)

Dr. Narendra Jadhav's father Damu under the influence of Dr. Ambedkar adopted rationality who condemned superstition and sorcery. But once in his absence Jadhav's mother Sonu called a witch doctor taking her mother- in- law into confidence to cure her sick son Sudha. Narendra jadhav narrated this incidence as comic joke:

> "The mystic healer came and laid out his paraphernalia in front of Bai (Jadhav's mother), who sat with Sudha on her lap. At the end of the ritualistic puja, he went into a frenzied trance, chanting some mantras, gyrating as if possessed. Un-expectantly, Dada came home. For an instance, he was stunned by what was going on in his house. But the next moment, he seized the witch doctor and slapped him hard. The poor man jumped out of his trance and disappeared, leaving behind all his belongings! Bai stood shivering in fear. We thought he might her too, but he only admonished her and Grandma, and warned them not to try anything except medicines on his children." (Jadhav 2003: p219)

In the memory of Urmila Pawar when she was a young girl she saw the Changes occurring in the Dalit Community after the Conversion Ceremony. The people became rational and stopped believing in superstitions. "All such things-ghosts, and supernatural experiences-stopped abruptly after the conversion ceremony took place." (Pawar 2003: p109) After Nagpur's Conversion Ceremony on the appeal of Dr. Ambedkar, the Neo-Buddhists organized local

programmes of Conversion Ceremony. One such programme was organized in Gogte College in Ratnagiri where Urmila participated along with her family. People immediately adhered upon the instructions given to them while converting to Buddhism. Desertion of idols of gods and goddesses was the first work the entire Dalit Community did after that programme:

> "After the ceremony, we came home. Govinddada and the villagers collected the idols and various pictures of gods and goddesses adorning our walls, which Aaye used to worship every day and threw them into a basket...now she appeared to have permanently done with the gods." (Pawar 2003: pp109-110)

Dalit writers through their autobiographies narrated the changes that occurred with Dr. Ambedkar's call for Conversion. Dalit Communities started adopting rational way of life by stopping the worship of gods and goddesses. After the Conversion Ceremony many Dalits drowned their idols of gods. The Twenty Two Vows given by Dr. Ambedkar inspired them to discard all old beliefs and rituals which were responsible for their untouchability and marginality.

Anicca i.e. The Universal Law of Impermanence:

According to Buddhism nothing is permanent in the world. Every element in this world neither be created nor destroyed. The change of form and change in the life of living is inevitable. Dalit writers also depict the change in life with the advancement of life, old age and diseases. These natural changes occur in human being help develop the Wisdom of writers and well as Community.

Dr. Jatava narrates the incidence of his father's death which made him courageous. "When I was at the far end of my eleventh year, my father was suddenly taken away from among us. He was still in robust health, when a choked

throat painlessly ended his earthly abode and left us all deeply bereaved". (Jatava 1999: p3) He narrates the incidence from his school where he saw dying animals and human skeleton in school laboratory that help developed his Wisdom. "We saw mother growing old and the sister attaining youth. But none of us felt defeated; rather we all set in towards the days of the light, progress and happiness." (Jatava 1999: p13)

Daya Pawar also witnesses the deterioration of his father's health and finally death. The writer already had knowledge about his father's ill habits of drinking and womanising therefore, he had developed a sense of hatred for him. His father's deterioration brought Wisdom to the writer which helped realising the ultimate Truth of human life. "Dada's health began to degenerate. Staying in the village had brought some improvement for the first few years but this was only the flaring of the flame before the candle finally goes out...he was moaning in the pain, babbling as if demented. They kept smearing him with holy ash from the family graveyard.no one had thought to take him to hospital. But still death would not come. In this delirium, he kept trying to pile his clothes up and built some kind of house. The cloths would fall over again and again." (Pawar 2015: p52)

Carrying dead animals, skinning it and then take away some meat to eat was a routine work for Dalits. Being a school going boy, Sharan Kumar Limbale developed a habit of contemplating over the dead animals. This was the reason why he developed aversion for dead animals. He understood the very nature of life which is tending to decay i.e. impermanence. "The skeleton of a dead animal lay rotten for many days. Ribs, the jaw, eye-sockets, horns, teeth, legs, everything looked so gruesome. In school we were once

shown a human skeleton which looked far more horrifying."(Limbale 2005: p15)

Limbale was living in Bhimnagar, Latur for his job. His home was near the crematorium where he witnessed death and decay every day. As a Buddhist by mind, Limbale contemplated on the death and decay of human being as anitya. He writes:

> "Every day I come across old people. How sickly they looked. Dead bodies, beating of drums, burning of dead bodies, someone weeping for his dead: these were my daily experiences and recalled Siddhartha deserting his home. In the evening I sat on the roof of my house. The corps burns slowly. My father-in –law burned in the same way. Chandamai must have rotted and become one with the earth by now." (Limbale 2005: p108)

In Buddhism it is believed that the four elements of body get mixed with the four elements of the earth. The writer is revealing the same elements and its merging with earth. These incidences of death and diseases by the writer suggest that the writer accepted the idea of annicca from Buddha. The realisation of Impermanence comes to Vasant Moon with the demise of Dr. Ambedkar. He was standing near the blazing funeral pyre of Dr. Ambedkar in Dadar, Mumbai. About his emotions and the understanding of anicca, he says:

> "During the trip I stored all of the sights calmly in my mind. While viewing the funeral pyre in Mumbai I maintained a calm and cool manner, keeping the words of Buddha fixed in my mind; 'this body will be destroyed; death is inevitable.' however, hearing the cry from the masses in Nagpur, my heart trembled. Without my being aware of it, tears began to fall from my eyes, and I began to cry along with everyone else." (Moon 2002: p162)

Dalit writers through these references have shown their understanding and realisation about the nature of human life. Their observation to the death of living being and then decay of the corps developed their knowledge and wisdom. Their ultimate lesson is that the every living being is reached its death someday. This not only helps correcting once Kamma but also help in generating merits for healthy life and happiness.

Nibbana (Enlightenment)

Nibbana is the ultimate aim of a Buddhist to achieve in one's life. To free from all desires and practice of the Noble Eightfold Path is essential for the nibbana. It is the awakening of Bodhi mind and bliss of liberty. In case of Dalit writers they were striving to be liberated from the clutches of the unjust society. Therefore, restoration of human values by organising a movement initiated by Dr. Ambedkar was the primary task the Dalit writers undertook.

On one hand Dalit writers were following the Buddhism taught by Dr. Ambedkar i.e. to generate merits and on the other hand they were burdened with the task to liberate their community from the unjustified social structures. Therefore, transformation of this liberate community into Buddhism in the view of Dr. Ambedkar was the goal of Dalit writers. Dalit writers through their autobiographies had shown their departure from worldly desires and cravings. Following the virtuous path as the practice of Buddhism, Dalit writers knowingly or unknowingly generated merit through the Moral Code of Conduct and accepting utter Humanism.

Daya Pawar was grown up in the Nagpada of Mumbai which was adjacent to the red light district of Kamathipura and Golpitha. The environment of his neighbourhood was obviously not healthy, full of corruption, cheating, and prostitution was at every step. Writer remains untouched of

all these demerits through Education and guarding of his mother from these ills. He always found his father who was a drunkard as well as womaniser in the wrong company. He develops aversion towards all these ill habits. Pawar was always contemplating for the Liberty of his Community from all these ill habits which were deep rooted in his community as blur. Pawar felt bad for his father who died of liver failure.

Omprakash Valmiki's Moral foundation was strong therefore, he did not submit to the craving of any kind of desires in his life. Once, Valmiki out of penniless state had to spend a night in Master Vedpal's room who was teaching at Tyagi Inter College, Deharadun. Next morning Valmiki was to catch a bus to his village. During the night a man and woman visited Master Vedpal. Master Vedpal asked Valmiki to sleep in Veranda. But one after another, Master Vedpal and that man were going inside the room. At one point of time that man asked Master Vedpal to send Valmiki inside. Valmiki was terrified with even the thought of the situation he was into. The turmoil in the mind of Valmiki indicates his liberty from worldly pleasures and ill thoughts. On the plight of that helpless woman, his thought pounded his mind as:

> "How did that woman feel about it, I could not even imagine at that time. I could not see what was going on inside the room because one of the men was always was outside. When I think of that woman today, I began to feel nauseated. What helplessness had brought her to them! Did she come willingly? A woman surrendering to two men, even today my mind refuses to accept it." (Valmiki 2003: p55)

Citing another occasion, Valmiki remembers his terrible condition when he for the first time witnessed skinning of a dead ox and secondly, piercing a knife through the piglet during a ritual in village in the absence of his father (who usually performed these works), his reason was not

supporting him. This very feeling of Valmiki was indicative of his departure from notions of the material world.

Sharankumar Limbale being the Akkarmashi suffered a lot as he had no identity at all since everyone within and outside of his caste treated him as impure. So he hated all people who were responsible for his condition. Later when one of his sister's Nagi started seeing one Nandu Patil, he felt a sense of anger as she too would give birth to illicit children as their mother did. He shouted at his sister and beat her and tried to dissuade her from such illicit relationship. Another incidence is noteworthy here. One upper caste girl named Shobhi used to abuse Sharan and his friends in the name of their low status. Once, Parshya and Sharan decided to avenge the insult she did by counter insulting her. Once seeing her all alone they stop her on way to river. Since a mere touch of untouchables polluted the upper caste people, Parshya held her hand to make her feel insulted and polluted and a thought to deflower her occurred to them. But some virtue dissuades them from committing that sin. Here Sharan shows Maturity and Control over his Desires.

Through their autobiographies, Dr. D. R. Jatava, Vasant Moon, Shantabai Kamble or Urmila Pawar have shown their material or carnal desires knowingly or unknowingly. These writers personally along with their families came under direct influence of Dr. Ambedkar's Movements. Therefore, Buddhist Values were inculcated in their family Culture and self. As a result of their family background and neighbourhood that was somewhat unhealthy, Daya Pawar and Sharankumar Limbale subsequently withdraw from material desires shown in their character and earned Character personally through Education and later coming in contact with Dr. Ambedkar's works. Aspects of escape from all kinds of desire, developing wisdom and earning merits by

all these writers were indicative of their path of enlightenment (Nibbana).

Buddhist Humanism as Saddhamma (Compassion, Love and Metta)

Compassion

Before and after the Conversion into Buddhism, Ambedkarite Community was living in unity and they helped each other even at the cost of one's life. There were many incidences depicted in Dalit Autobiographies where Dalit show their attachments and Compassion for fellow men and entire human society.

Dr. Jatava mentioned in his autobiography that: "the idea of my perennial humanism has its basic roots in some kind of ethical approach. It has a strong appeal for me. I have been attracted by the Buddha's stress on right means and I think one of his greatest contributions to our social life has been this emphasis. This was carried on by Dr. Ambedkar in practice." (Jatava1999: p217)

> "In fact as a humanist, I am interested in this world, in this life, not in some other world or a future life. I believe in right actions, and follow what is morally justified. I am convinced that the humanistic insight, which was strongly demonstrated by the Buddha and the Baba Ambedkar, has helped the human lot to the maximum extent. To them, man is the product of causes, human and natural, and by understanding them; he can improve the present lot of mankind." (Jatava1999: p217)

Shantabai Kamble depicted the contribution of her elder sister as a mother to them by taking care after their mother's death. The example shows the Compassion of an elder sister for her brethren. "Akka was always ready to give her siblings whatever food she had. She contended herself by merely pecking at things and filling her stomachs with water" (Rege 2006: p158)

The similar incidence she narrates in her autobiography as to how they came forward with monetary help to Kamble Master's widowed sister. On the death of Kamble Masters's brother- in- law, Shatabai suggested her husband to send money every month to his sister. "My husband readily agreed to this. I started sending her money". (Rege 2006: p191)

Limbale's grandmother worked as midwife. She attended pregnant women when they were in labour. "Whenever a woman had labour pains, she was sent for. She would be paid titbits for her work. People would come even at one or two o' clock in the night to call her. She would up ungrudgingly and attend to her duty as a midwife. Sometimes she was busy the whole night." (Limbale 2005: p57)

In Omprakash Valmiki's autobiography, he mentioned one incidence when one woman was brought by a man in Master's room and she was repeatedly used by both the men. Here young Valmiki had spent that night in great trouble. He felt bad for that woman who under what circumstances had submitted to the lust of those two men. Thus, extending Compassion towards that poor and vulnerable woman. In another incidence where he had to perform a sacrificial ceremony in his father's absence by piercing a sharp knife through a piglet's heart and on seeing blood oozing from the piglet's body, Valmiki ran towards his home, without completing his task indicating his Compassion for living beings.

There are number of small incidences in all these autobiographies where covertly or overtly Dalit writers have shown their Compassion towards all living beings.

Love and Metta

Limbale narrated his relation with the Dada who was in fact nobody to him since he was illegitimate child to his mother Masamai who did not care for him since she had daughters. Yet dada used to take care of him. "I felt as if dada was my real father, though we happened to be of different religions. Dada was in no way a relative from either my father's or my mother's side. And yet I felt that somehow we were of same flesh and blood. Dada's affection did not smell of his religion (Limbale 2005: p58).

Vasant Moon used to roam along with his friends in search of wild fruits to eat and gathered a handful of tidbits and come to Maharajbaugh zoo to feed the caged monkeys whom they loved.

> "We would toss the tidbits picked up on the way to the monkeys. Surya knew the habits of the animals very well. He would take some gram bits in his hands and holding his hand inside the cage and opening his fist, call the monkeys to eat. The monkeys would hold on with one hand and eat with the other. We went there so many times. Because of this the monkeys became familiar to us. We called them by such names as Red cheek, Whiteface, Whitney; we would call to them, tease them, give them some love and go on." (Moon 2002: p25)

Ompraksh Valmiki narrated an incidence in his autobiography when he was in Chandrapur where he befriended a sub Inspector Kureishi who once took him at night to beat the Dacoity eradication force campaign of the police department. On way to Vani from Chandrapur they spotted a young boy. Kureishi stopped his Jeep and enquired as to where he was going alone. On the answer that the policeman received from the young boy that he was walking the distance to his village near Vani, suspicion developed in Kureishi's mind. He slapped him and tried to know the real reason. Though the boy was pleading,

Kureishi wasn't convinced and on this issue Valmiki felt bad for the poor boy and developed sympathy for him and at the same time he was shocked with the bizarre behaviour of Kureishi. He intervened the interrogation of Kureishi with the words:

> "Kureishi, in your eyes this boy may be liar, a thief, or a dacait or god knows what. But what is true is that he has no money in his pocket... And still you are assaulting him. The hotel owner who didn't pay him his salary, you can't even raise a finger at him...can you policemen find a law to help the boy? To help him collect the pay owing to him? Or does your penal code consist only of beating him up?" (Valmiki 2003: p119)

Valmiki's words not only provoked sympathy and support to the poor boy, Kureishi also realised his mistake. Kureishi then took that boy in the jeep and straightway reached the hotel the boy had mentioned. Kureshi made enquiries at the hotel ordered the owner to pay the boy his duesat once. In this way the boy got his rightful wages.

Dr. Narendra Jadhav's father recounted his memory when there was a great downpour in the village. Small hut was leaking and no place inside the hut was dry. They were collecting water in small containers falling from the roof. While throwing water Damu happened to see the shivering goats. He was moved with Compassion and brought them inside. "When I went to pour water outside, the goats were bleating pitifully. I felt sorry for them and brought them in. they were shivering in the cold so I dried them with a rag. They huddled together following me around the tiny hut." (Jadhav 2003: p36)

Love and metta are the supreme Values of Humanism practiced by Buddhists all over the world. Dalit writers on one hand were marginalized; therefore, they had bonding with their fellow brothers. They worked for the Welfare of

each member of their community. Cooperation and camaraderie was seen on a number of occasions in these autobiographies.

Human Values (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Justice)

Dalit Community under the influence of Dalit Movements was developing Self-Identity and Self-Esteem. Shantabai being a school teacher did not submit to the ill thought and action of her husband when he was about to get married with his maternal sister when Shantabai was pregnant. She confronted her husband courageously and challenged patriarchy. "She told him (Kamble master her husband) to give her sodchitthi (a customary form of the breaking of marriage ties in the presence of members of the caste panchayat) and then he could bring new wife home and in disgust she took a bus back home to Mahud village" (Rege 2006: p164)

Dr. Jatava depicts the brotherhood existed amongst his community men. His own father was a man of helping nature. He was highly social and involved in the community affairs readily. "The father was very co-operative, always being helpful to those who were needy and distressed. He was friendly and participated in all the activities of the locality, whether it was marriage, a Panchayat, or a case of a funeral or feast. As he was altruist, none was his enemy, only a few friends he had with him." (Jatava 1999: p2)

Dr. Jatava himself has shown an example of self by helping Dalit students getting admission in the hostel of Govt. College, Sri Ganganagar: (fraternity) "then I met the principal and convinced him of the necessity of admitting the students of Valmiki community. They were few in number yet faced an acute problem of residing somewhere. During the year 1964-65 some of them were admitted in the hostel" (Jatava 1999: p58)

Vasant Moon's autobiography has a number of examples about the fraternity and solidarity amongst the community men and women. "The community produced thieves but no one there was afraid of being molested by robbers. If anyone harassed the girls of the community his life would no longer be secure. Even widowed women used to leave their little girls at home and fearlessly go out to work." (Moon 2002" p.5)

Mahar students took care of the girls from their community. Moon narrated examples of Mahar students' Unity and Solidarity towards their community men. "Mahar students in the college were few in number, but organized. They would take part in all the events and happenings of the college. There was competition to win their confidence for elections. There was a foursome of mahar students named Ate, Mate, Bele and Bansod. If there was any complaint about someone harassing a mahar girl, this quartet would always teach him a lesson." (Moon 2002: p119)

Omprakash Valmiki spent major time in Maharashtra during his service where he came in contact with many Dalit Ambedkarite Activists. So also he was influenced by Buddha's Teachings and Philosophy. He reveals Buddha's influences upon him as: "Buddha's philosophy on human freedom had attracted me. He says that there is no such thing as unchangeable in a constantly changing universe. The human being alone matters. It is Karuna and wisdom that takes a person towards transcendence." (Valmiki 2003: p100)

Dalit writers are staunch followers of Dr. Ambedkar so they have embraced Buddhism on his call. Dehumanisation in the structured caste system made them crumbled. Therefore, they decided to improve their standard of life by embracing Buddhism. Dr. Ambedkar's Movement was

initiated to restore Values of liberty, equality fraternity, and justice to all Dalits which were removed from them in the name of religion. Autobiographies of these Dalit writers have mentioned the dehumanised state of Dalit community in the absence of these values. They were able to restore their lost values after joining the Movement of Dr. Ambedkar and by accepting Buddhism.

Buddhist Culture and Buddhist Symbols

Buddhism was the main religious belief in ancient India. Since it declined from most parts of the country, its culture too vanished from people's lives. Dr. Ambedkar's Mass Conversion into Buddhism along with Dalits; connected these people with their past heritage and culture. Dr. Ambedkar through his research, especially *The Untouchables: who were they and why they became untouchables,* established the fact that these ex-untouchables were the followers of Buddhism in ancient times. Neo - Buddhists adopted the Buddhist way of life in every section of their life. A massive Cultural Transformation occurred in the country during few decades from the Conversion of 1956.

Culture and Cultural Symbols

'Culture' according to Cambridge Dictionary, is "the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, on a particular group of people at a particular time." (Cambridge University Press 2016) Also Ian Buchanan defines it as: "A set of beliefs, practices, rituals and traditions shared b group of people with at least on point of common identity (such as their ethnicity, race or nationality). At least core is the sense that is different from nature in that it is a conscious choice and not the instincts." (Buchanan 2010: p105) According to Dr. Yashwant Manohar:

> "A life style of a society is its culture. Life style includes distinct rituals, understandings, traditions, and values. Culture

> of a society reflects through people's behaviour and language. Also culture of a man reflects through the language he speaks, arrangements of various items in his home, photos in his home, eatables, his method of thinking and its directions, subjects of his reading, adoption of ideals and moral values to his life." (Manohar 1999: p124)

On the basis of these definitions, Culture of a community or society could be derived from the beliefs, thought process and development of various art forms adopted by that society or group of men. Physical representations of such culture many a times represents through specific symbols as cultural symbols. "A cultural symbol is a physical manifestation that signifies the ideology of a particular culture or that merely has meaning within a culture. What is culture, you may ask? Culture is an accumulation of the beliefs, traditions, language and values of a particular group of people." (Gonzalez 2016) In Christianity, the Holy Cross is a Cultural symbol. Similarly many cultural symbols have been introduced by people practicing Buddhism. Dr. Prakash Kharat maintains: "Many essential factors comes up with the Dr. Ambedkar's Dhammakranti, like values of Buddhist culture in Architecture. Images of Stupa, Dhammachkra, Buddha's hand symbol, circular images and symbols in Ajanta, octagone, forms in three refuges, etc. are found on the homes of Buddhist people." (Kharat 2005: p63) Buddha's right hand where the index finger is touching the thumb represents blessings, Asoka Wheel which is adopted on the Tri-colour flag of India represents the continuity of Buddha Dhamma's influence upon human society, the Five colour flag which was adopted by world Buddhists in 1952 represents Buddhism, the Peepal tree or its leaves represent the Bodhi i.e. Enlightenment, number three represents three refuges (Trisharana) i.e. Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, number five represents the Five Precepts (Panchasila) and

number eight represents the Eight Noble Path as the way to nibbana, etc.

Dr. Ambedkar's book *Buddha and his Dhamma* is treated as a sacred book of Buddhism by Indian Buddhists. What Bible is to Christians and Koran to Muslim's, *The Buddha and his Dhamma* is to the Indian Buddhists. Indian Buddhism after Dr. Ambedkar's Conversion develops its distinct position in the world Buddhists. It is not close to Mahayana or any other major Buddhist sects, it is close to Theravada. Therefore, what Indian Buddhists believe could be understood from Dr. Ambedkar's book *The Buddha and his Dhamma.* Greeting is held important in exchanging wishes to each other in a particular way or through words when they meet or part. Indian Buddhists also developed such expressions like, 'Namo Buddhay' and 'Jai-Bhim' these expressions show one's respect to Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar respectively. The expression 'Jai-Bhim' came into force during the lifetime of Dr. Ambedkar which was introduced by one of his followers Hardas L.N. from Kamptee (Nagpur).

Reflection of Buddhist Culture and Symbols:

Dalit Autobiography portrays the Dalit Community which adopted new Buddhist way of life and story of its transformation from its old beliefs. Cultural transformation could be seen in the second half of these autobiographies. References of Buddhist Culture and system of Buddhist Symbols in the autobiographies reflect its influence upon Dalit writers.

Dr. D. R. Jatava recorded the Buddhist festivals by Neo-Buddhist Community and their ways of celebrating them. He witnessed Dr. Ambedkar's speech in New Delhi. He attended such programmes shows new influences upon his thought process. "When I was a typist clerk in railway board,

New Delhi, on the occasion of Buddha Jayanti in May 1955, I witnessed a procession in the streets of Delhi during the day and in the evening. I went to Ambedkar Bhawan, Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi, to attend the celebrations of Buddha Jayanti." (Jatava 1999: p163) Jatava had seen Dr. Ambedkar for very first time. Dr. Ambedkar came in the company of Buddhist Monks and had delivered mesmerizing speech on the occasion which was based on his book *The Buddha and his Dhamma.* Later, when he conducted his doctoral and post-doctoral researches on Dr. Ambedkar's hilosophy, he developed his knowledge of Buddhism:

> "I believe in the teaching of the Buddha and also practice them to the best of my ability and knowledge. The Buddhist way of life is the path of Prajna (right understanding), sila (right conduct), samata (equality), Karuna (love), and maître (friendship), which I adhere to as far as possible. These are the human values that make man's life good and sublime." (Jatava 1999: p183)

Dr. Jatava confesses that Buddhism brought them the lost human values and through education, he learnt that the major culture of Humanism in the country was inherited from Buddhism.

> "How do I interpret the culture and religions of India? Nothing more than what the Buddha had taught us as Dhamma centuries ago...we have inherited Dhamma from Buddha as a struggle for freedom and equality, and it was as an aspiration for a just social order. The inherited historical humanism of the s Buddha and the inherited freedom and rights of individuals in our constitution are golden opportunities before our countrymen to preserve and extend for the welfare of many: for the happiness of many. The flag of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice was unfurled by Dr. Ambedkar to lead us for a radical social change. So I have no choice other than accepting the philosophies of Buddha, Dr. Ambedkar and the Indian Constitution, for they all highlight

> the worth of man and the cause of egalitarian norms for righteousness." (Jatava 1999: p187)

Buddhists don't see any kind of discrimination in the name of caste, religion or creed. Born as *akkarmashi,* Limbale faced trouble while finding a bride for him. He was a graduate yet nobody came forward to give his /her daughter to him, for them he was of impure blood. Janabai was the friend to Limbale's grandmother who agrees to give her niece to him but later declined. When Mallay's uncle Maryappa who was a Buddhist heard this he became infuriated with Janabai. He said, "There is no high or low born in our Buddhist religion. I will give my daughter to him." For Limbale "these words from Maryappa were more precious to me than the sermons Buddha preached after attaining enlightenment. Here Maryappa represents the Egalitarian Philosophy of Buddhism.

During marriage ceremony, Buddhists print Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar's images on invitation cards like Hindus who print photos of Gods and Goddesses. Limbale's family was under the influence of Patil Kaka who was a Hindu. Therefore, Limbale was dominated by him though he wanted to conduct his marriage the Buddhist way. His parents-in-law were Buddhists therefore they followed the Buddhist way. "My in-laws from Barshi printed photographs of Dr. Ambedkar on the invitation cards, but Kaka printed photographs of Shiva and Parvati ... I decorated the hall with the icons of Buddha, Phule and Ambedkar, I wanted my wedding ceremony conducted according to Buddhist rituals." (Limbale 2005: p99) Replacing images of god and goddesses with Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar was to represent their new faith. Buddhist marriage invitation cards later underwent significant change to spread a social message with quotes and brief message of Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar. The Asoka Wheel and Peepal leaves also appeared on such

marriage cards where the Asoka Wheel represents continuity of the influence of Dhamma on life and the Peepal leaves are symbolic of Bodhi i.e. Enlightenment. Therefore, in many rituals of Buddhists, Peepal leaves are generally used. Limbale mentioned another fact of Dalits converted into Buddhism thus revealing the new Buddhist culture: "Dalits refused to do the lowly jobs that they once did for Hindus. Such changes in the Dalit community occurred with their conversion to Buddhism." (Limbale 2005: p103)

Vasant Moon recounts many memories from his life. He witnessed the cultural change occurred in Dalit community of Nagpur after Dr. Ambedkar's entry into their lives. Dr. Ambedkar's Conversion call of 1935 brought primary changes predicting new religion with rationalism. Soon after Dr. Ambedkar's bent towards Buddhism it was adopted by Dalits. Dr. Ambedkar was already a Messiah to them therefore; many singers, groups and drama performers brought themes on Dr. Ambedkar's life and Buddhism. These groups were thr awakening of the Dalit Community to join the Ambedkar Movement. People used to gather in the name of Babasaheb. Moon writes:

> "One day a blind man and his lame sighted wife came to beg alms. The two sang together the hymns about Babasaheb Ambedkar in fine, thin voices. Once the words "Bhimrao Ambedkar" came out of their mouths, women and children came out from all over the nearby houses and began to listen...at the beginning Gondhadis or traditional singing troupes used to come...after the gondhadis, the Ambedkar play troupes came; hymn-singing groups also sang about Babasaheb. The springtime of poets and singers came after the founding of the Scheduled Caste Federation in 1942. The drama troupe of Uddhav was famous throught the whole Marathi speaking region of the Central Provinces." (Moon 2002: p108)

Moon also mentioned the crooning of Conversion in his autobiography. Wamanrao Godbole, a close associate of Dr. Ambedkar brought a news much before 1950 that Dr. Ambedkar was embracing Buddhism. Leaders felt a need of orientation of Dalits about Buddhism. "Wamanrao Godbole, Keshavrao Patil, and other Dal leaders decided to hold a class every Sunday to give people an understanding of Buddhism. (Moon 2002: p125) Justice Bhawani Shankar Niyogi from Nagpur used to deliver his lecture for these Dalits in the Dhanwate Chambers.

Shifting from old religious beliefs to new Buddhism has been clearly depicted in Moon's autobiography. Buddha along with Dr. Ambedkar inspires Dalit youths. Moon reflects, "Buddhism had exerted some kind of influence on the dal activists for a long time. While I was in seventh standard the Dal presented me with Dharmanand Kosambi's *Lord Buddha* in Marathi as a prize. After the new temple trust committee was found, a four foot statue of Lord Buddha was placed in a square glass box in the meeting room just outside the inner room of temple." (Moon 2002: p131) Dr. Ambedkar Jayanti was celebrated for ten days every year. In the similar way, Nagpur Dalit Community started celebrating Buddha Jayanti.

After the Conversion Ceremony was over, New Buddhists started their practices in Buddhism. Moon writes: after the Buddhist conversion ceremony, Hindu wedding rituals were rejected. People decided not to take anything from old wedding ceremony. The new festivities had not yet decided, but even then the new converts threw away their old customs and rituals along with the idols of gods and goddesses, just as worn out clothes are thrown away. They started performing wedding ceremonies by chanting three refuges (Trisharana) and the five precepts (Pancasila) and

the Buddha's Puja as found in Babasaheb's book The Buddha and his Dhamma." (Moon 2002: p168)

Buddhist people gather in Buddha Vihars (Monastery) on the birth anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar and Buddha. Also these people gather on full moon day to worship Buddha. Omprakash Valmiki mentioned one of such regular meeting in Bhadravati Buddhist caves (Maharashtra). "There was an ancient Buddhist cave in Bhadravati where celebrations were held on Buddha Poornima. Umesh Meshram and his group had organised a Buddhist writer's conference where I had an opportunity to meet many Marathi Dalit writers." Buddhist writers interface is now a regular feature and accepted as the Cultural interaction amongst Ambedkarite Buddhists. It is the platform from where they promote Ambedkarism and Buddhism.

Valmiki's closeness to Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan drew him near Buddhism. He read many books from Tripitaka (Buddha's teachings and Philosophy in three baskets) translated by Rahul Sankrityayan. This was the Buddhist Cultural impact upon him through one of the great masters of Buddhism in contemporary times. He maintained: "I read many books on Buddhism via Rahulji's translations. Anguttar Nikay, Majjim Nikay, Sanyukta Nikay, Dirgha Nikay, Buddha Darshan and so on. These books inspired a new consciousness in me." (Valmiki 2003: p122)

Dr. Ambedkar's Movement brought about a sea change in the lives of Dalits. Under his influence Dalits improved their standard of living. Buddhism was the way of life which influenced them along with Dr. Ambedkar. Sonu, mother of Dr. Narendra Jadhav recollects her memory of bringing change in living:

> "Listening to Babasaheb's teachings in this manner gradually had an effect on me and Najuka (Her sister-in-law). We were

> thoroughly taken in by Babasaheb's thoughts on cleanliness and grooming. The first step towards gaining acceptance from others, and being proud of who you are, a Dalit, is to maintain good hygiene and neat and clean grooming, Babasaheb had said. We began to bath daily, and dress neatly with freshly washed clothes and tie our hair into a neat bun. We kept our house immaculately clean with all the brass pots and pans polished and shining" (Jadhav 2003: p178)

Dalits who were inspired by Dr. Ambedkar started internalising Buddhism even before the Conversion Ceremony. Images of Dr. Ambedkar and Buddha were kept in home as their respect to these great men. It is well accepted culture in the Ambedkarite community. Jadhav's mother narrated one of such incidence when her husband Damu brought Buddha's photo:

> "One day my man brought a picture of Buddha. Our neighbours gathered around curiously. The picture passed from hand to handand a few of them joined hands in obeisance, while some others said he looked like a saint and not like a God. I looked at the picture and saw a serene smiling face with one hand raised in benediction." (Jadhav 2003: pp 183-184)

Urmila Pawar's autobiography clearly gives a panoramic narration to the changes that occurred in Dalit Community after Dr. Ambedkar's Conversion Ceremony into Buddhism. A new cultural change occurred in the life of Dalits.

> "After conversion, Govindada hung a portrait of Dr. Ambedkar on wall in god's room and kept a Buddha idol in the place vacated by the gods. His daily prayers had stopped. Activists from our Wadi went from door-to-door to teach people the Buddha Vandana. Now people of our community went around with feeling that there is no reason to pray to gods for comfort, as if all comforts were automatically delivered at their doorsteps. The activists organised Buddha Vandana every evening." (Pawar 2003: p111)

Urmila Pawar also narrated the first marriage of her aunt Bhikiakka's step son she witnessed according to the Buddhist system and was performed in Mirjole. It was the marriage which was guided by local leaders brought surprize and curiosity to local Dalits.

> "The activists had warned all the women in the community not to perform any of the older rituals such as applying turmeric on the bridegroom's body, tying floor mundawals around his crown, tying a mangalsutra around the bride's neck and playing instruments such as Dhol and Tashe! All of these to be dropped!" (Pawar: 2003: p112)

The marriage ceremony was performed by Boudhachaya Mirjolkar. (Boudhacharya is a trained Buddhist lay person who conducts various religious activities like a Buddhist monk does. Since Dr. Ambedkar announced that Buddhist monks had greater works to perform as a teacher, social programmes like marriage, naming ceremonies etc. should be performed by the trained lay persons. Therefore, a tradition of Boudhaycharya started in Maharashtra.) He kept photos of Dr. Ambedkar and Buddha on the table covered with white cloth. Garlanded the Dr. Ambedkar's photo and offered some flowers to Buddha. He then lit the five candles and incense sticks then a bunch of Peepal tree branches were kept in a pitcher filled with water and one end of a long thread dipped into it. After this preparation the bride clad in white saree and the bridegroom in white clothes came on the stage. After taking permission of the president of the marriage ceremony the priest performed the ritual.

> "Then the Panchasheel and Trisharan were recited and the bride and bridegroom exchanged the rings. They had to take twenty two oaths, which the priest made them repeat after him. Next they put garland of marigold flower around each other's necks and we showered petals of the same on them...when the mangalsutra with black beads was brought in

> for the bride, the priest rejected it and admonished the relative to bring one with white beads...after the ceremony of exchanging garlands and tying mangalsutra was over, five married women were invited to apply the Haldi-kumkum on the bride and offer her toe rings. ..Many women were openly critical and were dying to sing the usual marriage songs but were forbidden as the songs contained the names of gods!" (Pawar 2003: p.116)

By the time Urmila Pawar's elder sister got married, new changes occurred in Buddhist culture amongst Dalits. She narrates:

> "Tai's marriage took place in a hall with much fanfare. A band played. This was around 1964 or 1965. The custom of serving ice-cream to wedding guests had just started among the neo Buddhists, around this time. Women learnt to sing songs without taking the names of god and goddesses around the same time" (Pawar 2003: p.146)

Buddhist marriageable boys and girls started taking liberty in selecting their partners. Although, most of the marriages during that time were fixed by the parents, Urmila Pawar's marriage was arranged with her boyfriend Harishchandra by challenging the tradition. Marriage expenses were shared by both the parties which was a new development. The bride's side was not supposed to bear the expenses for the travelling to bridegroom's party unlike in other communities. On the other preparations of her marriage she writes:

> "There was hardly any shopping as such to be done. My family was not going to buy anything for Harishchandra; on his part, Harishchandra was going to buy some sarees for me... a few marriage invitations were printed on thin paper, just as formality. The neo- Buddhist 'Namo Buddhay' had replaced the traditional invocation of the family deity on the top of the invitation! But the traditional 'Chiranjeev' and 'Soubhagya kankshini' respectively, before the groom and the bride, were retained. They still are. Usually a bride would not

> distribute her marriage invitations in person. But since I did not have option, I had to do it myself." (Pawar 2003: p174)

References of Buddha Birth Anniversary, Dr. Ambedkar's Birth Anniversary, observing days on full moon, marriage ceremony, and various other ceremonial programmes performed in Buddhist communities have occurred in all these autobiographies. Various Buddhist Symbols and its importance to Buddhists too have found a place here. Buddhist Culture and Symbols in Dalit Autobiography in connection with Dalit writers brought a progressive picture of whole community which was undergoing a massive transformation where these writers were a part of the changes that took place. Being Ambedkarite creative writers these people played a vital role in promoting the Buddhist Values of Humanism, and also recorded the history of Neo-Buddhist Community in the last few decades.

Creative Literature, Performing Arts and Buddhist /Dalit Conferences as a New Culture

Dr. Ambedkar's Conversion also brought a new literary and creative art Culture. Commenting upon the beginning of Literary Culture, Dr. Prakash Kharat says:

> "Dhammakranti of Dr. Ambedkar has brought change in the Indian psyche. Mind is the centre of a person. The way mind thinks so things happen. Contemporary forms of Rituals, traditions, festivals, celebrations, fast, religions are creating superstitions. It forces one to spend lots of money. These religious festivals force one to spend money on elsewhere instead spending it on buying books for children. So Dr. Ambedkar thought teaches to keep education on top priority. With this consciousness, Buddhist community learn through the inspiration of Dr. Ambedkar. A new educated middle class is born out of it. They created Ambedkarite Literary movement through the inspiration of Dr. Ambedkar. They also created a new literary culture. Many new literary streams have risen up with his inspiration." (Kharat 2005: p63)

Dalit autobiographies narrate the Development of creative literature and various performing Arts like Ambedkari Jalasa, Ballad Singers, Drama, etc. at a number of places. All these performing arts were developed during the initial stage of Dr. Ambedkar's Movement to increase people's participation in the Movement but later they were devoted spreading the Buddha's teachings along with the works of social awakening. Dalit Autobiography sincerely recorded the development of the Dalit Literary circle in Maharashtra State and also these writers' participation in various literary meet (Sahitya Sammelana) and Conferences.

In *Joothan* Omprakash Valmiki's recorded his participation in Literary Movements in Maharashtra especially in Mumbai and Chandrapur. His association with noted Dalit writers and thinkers like Loknath Yashvant, Kiran Meshram, Dr. Gangadhar Pantavne the celebrated editor of *Asmitadarsh* the beginning platform of Dalit writings, many Dalit Activist writers of Dalit Panthers, etc. is mentioned in last part of *Joothan*. Valmiki was also instrumental in forming *Meghdoot Natya Sanstha* to perform many Dalit skits and Dramas in the neighbouring regions of Chandrapur.

Vasant Moon recorded the influence of Dr. Ambedkar's Weekly *Janata* and poems published in it. Literary development of Dalits with the Conversion of 1956 has been mentioned at length in the autobiography. In the last part of her autobiography, Urmila Pawar narrated her engagement in the Marathi Dalit Literary activities. Her support to the wish of Hira Bansode to create a literary platform for Dalit women has an elaborated discussion in the work. She also mentioned her idea of creativity by narrating the choosing of her theme and characters. Autobiographies of Sharan Kumar Limbale, Shantabai Kamble and Daya Pawar also

recorded the various Dalit Literary Meet and Buddhist Conferences.

Summing up, an autobiography is the oldest as well as important personal genre of literary writings. Commonly autobiographies are considered as truthful and authentic. In western tradition autobiography begins with St. Augustine's Confession in 5th century AD. But in India traces of self-narratives found with the Theras and Theris of Buddha's Sangha contemporary to him in 6th century B.C. Conventional Autobiographies were continued to be written throughout the medieval and modern period.

Dalit autobiography also developed with other genres of Dalit literature in the last four-five decades of the 21st century. Autobiography became a prominent medium for Dalits to express themselves completely without any inhibition. These autobiographies covered life of Dalits who were crushed under the typical Indian social hierarchy. Thus they acted as the mirrors of the entire Dalit community and revealed to the world the untold, unreserved and undisclosed life of the Dalits. Since Dalit writers indulged in portraying Dalit's life through the subtle description of injustice, insult, oppression, at the hand of caste Hindus and the terrible plight of theirs in utter poverty and hunger, left little space to linger on philosophy. Influence of Buddhism brought a sea change into the life of these people, yet in the autobiography it appears in the aspect of changing community, therefore, being to becoming remains prime object and elements of Buddhism becomes unintentional but essential object in the autobiographies. These autobiographies emphasise more on giving way to their inner oppressed mind and sufferings borne by their community. Dr. Ambedkar's entry into the life of Dalits begins the story of transformation of these poor communities into a rich

tradition. That was the turning point of entry of rationalism and inculcation of human values in their lives.

Dalit communities possess progressive thoughts in the influence of early Dalit movements. Universal Law of Kamma works negatively as well as positively. The results of one's deed could be seen immediately in this life only. The Dalit people before conversion used to go to temples to grant their wishes from imaginary god, it was their ignorance. Dalit consciousness is prominently seen in Dalit autobiographies everywhere. Dalits were aware about their position in the caste system. The families discussed in these autobiographies were going parallel to the Dalit movement in the country particularly in the state of Maharashtra. Therefore, these Dalits were started getting oriented about their human rights. The consciousness was certainly connected with their rights and forging their identity.

Dalit communities' depicted in these autobiographies are hard-working and earn their means of livelihood from lawful occupations. They possess progressive thoughts in the influence of early Dalit movements. Universal Law of Kamma works negatively as well as positively. The results of one's deed could be seen immediately in this life only. Dalit autobiographers narrate many incidences which show the working of Kamma. Dalit converted into Buddhism along with Dr. Ambedkar took twenty two vows. These vows are based on the rejection of their previous illogical beliefs which were responsible for their slavery. After conversion, Dalit community transformed into Buddhist culture therefore, rejection of old faith prominently seen in the Dalit narratives.

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Five

Dalit Aesthetics and Buddhism

Beginning of Debate on Dalit Literature and its Aesthetics

Dalit Literature got its beginning in Marathi and soon it spread in different regional languages with the flavoured local dialects and sociolects. "The Dalit literary movement was a collective endeavour of the neo-Buddhists elite to create a new culture of social equality." (Sharma 2013: p225) It was already established in Maharashtra with its distinctive nature and unique literary qualities when it found its way into the other regional languages from late 1970s. Dalit Literature's major genres like poetry, short stories, critical essays and autobiographies were already mature in shape when it started banging the mind of general readership. Terrible life experiences, crude realities of life, atrocities, unimaginable images from Dalit ghettos, dehumanised psyche of Dalits under caste system, all started coming out like bubbling hot springs. Soon after, it received a bitter reaction and hostility from the mainstream writers and critics. Many of them did not agree to call it as a literary creation at all. Very few of the established writers came forward in defence of this creativity. The "unsophisticated" language of Dalit Literature which was taken from the original language used in the Dalit ghettos and from rural setups received more opposition and criticism.

There were many issues and queries on the basis of Dalit Literature and its validity gave rise to a nationwide debate. The controversial issues like, can any literature be Dalit? Why Dalit writers use crude, abusive and harsh language? Why only Dalit writers could write Dalit Literature and why not others? Why Dalit Literature requires separate Aesthetics? There were also reactions from non-Dalit writers that Dalit Literature should be critiqued as a common literature, etc. On the other hand Dalit writers were charged with being decisive and sectarian for they opened a battle against the typical Indian Social Hierarchy i.e. "Chaturvarna System" with abusive and disrespectful language. Mainstream writers also felt that Dalit Literature lacked the literary merits against the universal criterion. Also it is commonly criticised that it has no aesthetic value sinceDalit writers are activists at the same time overpowered with the emotions that subvert the possibility of evolving an aesthetic.Therefore, Dalit intellectual writers came forward with the defence of their writings. The basis of Dalit Aesthetics in Indian literatures is as similar as the requirement of Dalit Theology in Christianity recently.

Two books are published independently on Dalit Aesthetics, first, was Sharankumar Limbale's *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature: History, Controversies and Considerations* English translation (2004) and the second, by Omprakash Valmiki's*Aesthetics of Dalit Literature* (2005). Prior to these books, Sharad Patil's *Aesthetics of non-Brahmin Literature (*Abrahmani Sahityache Saudaryashatra) was published in 1998 where for the very first time a need for separate Aesthetics for Dalit Literature was proposed. Also there were massive discussions and debate went on in various magazines and journals during the last few decades on this topic. Dalit Literature in the hands of contemporary writers was taking shape in "the little magazine movement

which was a kind of rebellious manifestation of the educated youths of those days against the establishment." (Sharma 2013: p226) The rebellion attitude was the guiding thread of Dalit Literature which separates them from the conventional literature.

Why separate Dalit Aesthetics?

Separate Dalit Aesthetics is the topic of discussion and debate in case of Dalit Literary criticism. Dalits in the Indian social hierarchy were dehumanised and subject to all kinds of humiliation. Through this literature Dalits started expressing their pain and sufferings of the ages. The agony and sufferings are expressed in the form of anger, cry, and sometimes unusual words (foul and abusive language). Awakened Dalits started rejecting the culture of injustice and started questioning the validity of the age old social system. Dr. Bhalchandra Phadke in his article published in special Diwali issue of *Asmitadarsh* put forward his opinion supporting separate aesthetics based on elements in Dalit Literary Creativity. According to him if one gives serious thought to Dr. Ambedkar's Philosophy, impetus received by Dalit Literature from Dalit Movement, nature of Dalit Literature, myths in Dalit Literature, world of images, and language of Dalit Literature, then conventional aesthetics would be inadequate in evaluating Dalit Literature. He also found that the conventional aesthetics which was still in vogue was either class based or caste based. "Dalits have been a part of the Hindu society and yet were outside it in the sense in which they were marginalised and inescapably reduced to servitude. This gives the Dalit an opportune position to question and critique caste Hindu and Indian aesthetics" (Saksena 2010: p40) Dalit literature is reflected as the literature of protest and sheds light on the relationship of the powerful versus powerless, oppressor versus oppressed, and exploiters versus exploited, etc. Bitter life experiences,

struggle of identity, and thoughts of liberty, equality and fraternity of Dalits found expression in various genres of literature such as poetry, short stories, novels, plays, autobiographies, criticism (prose), etc.

Dalit Literature is a life oriented literature which is born out of Dalit Chetana (Dalit Consciousness).Dalit Consciousness is the consciousness of Values as a human being. It indicates awareness to a Dalit's right to live life of dignity; it seeks liberty, equality fraternity and justice in the context of political, socio-economic, and cultural aspects. Therefore, these values of Buddhist Socialism and Dalit Consciousness distinguish Dalit Literature from Canonical literature. Most of the Conventional literature relies on imagination and fancy, on the other hand Dalit Literature portrays realities in a Dalit's life in reality. Hence, Dalit Literature is different from Conventional literature. The absence of Dalit Consciousness in Conventional literature, according to Dalit writers, is unjustifiable to evaluate Dalit Literature. Supporting the stand of separate Dalit Aesthetics, Dr. Shatrughna Jadhav says, "The demand of separate Dalit aesthetics came from the distinction of Dalit literature. The appreciation and evaluation of Dalit literature cannot be done with the conventional or Mardhekar's theory, because form and nature of Dalit literature is different. Elements of Dalit literature like, rejection, suffering, protest, agitation, etc. are unknown to conventional literature."(Jadhav 2003: p67) Similarly Dalit writers felt that the eight Rasa depicted in classical aesthetics could not give justice to evaluate Dalit Literature because both these literatures follow two different traditions. As Dalit Literature was influenced by Buddhist Culture and Philosophy, Buddhist Values like Consciousness, Peace, Compassion, Sympathy, Equanimity, and Cooperation are the elements which could be helpful to understand the Dalit Literature on the critical ground.

Therefore, "aesthetics of necessity must be different because caste is a problem peculiar to India and does not exist anywhere else in the world." (Saksena2013: p33)

Necessity of Dalit Aesthetics has been a topic widely discussed in the literary circles. Dr. Yashwant Manohar found the necessity of Dalit Aesthetics but he is persistent in calling it as Ambedkarite Aesthetics. According to him aesthetics does not have name of limitations. It was the name of values. In the changing world of values, various enormous values were keeping its separateness. In one of such identical values, it was named as Marxist aesthetics, then, what was wrong with the idea when values inculcated in one of such aesthetics influenced by Dr. Ambedkar be called as Dalit Aesthetics or Ambedkarite Aesthetics. The necessity of Dalit Aesthetics is felt by many Dalit and non-Dalit writers and critics.

Ideas in Western and Indian Aesthetics

The word "aesthetics" etymologically is derived from Greek origin "aisthetikos" which means 'sense perception.' According to Encyclopaedia, "aesthetics, also spelled esthetics, the philosophical study of beauty and taste. It is closely related to the philosophy of art, which is concerned with the nature of art and the concepts in terms of which individual works of art are interpreted and evaluated." (Britannica 2016) Aesthetics as a branch of Philosophy works on the broad premises as Art, Beauty, Taste and the Creation and Appreciation of Beauty.

According to Western Philosophy, aesthetics deals with the nature and value of art. Also it focuses on the responses to the natural objects through expressions in the language of 'the beautiful' and 'the ugly.' Philosophers give emphasis to these terms in discussions or in criticisms more. In his book *On the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Edmund Burke

distinguishes 'Beautiful' from the 'sublime' which was highly influential in the contemporary times. But in the modern literary theories, elements such as representation, expression, form, style and sentimentality find a focus. Western theories also involve response, attitude and emotions for the aesthetic experience. In the recent times Hegelian theories influences modern aesthetics where study of various art forms are attached with the peculiar spiritual aspects attached to them.

Western theory takes expression as 'intentional' or 'material' object of aesthetic experience. According to Clive Bell, Art is distinguished by its characteristics i.e. "significant form". Also "point of view" is involved in Western study in case of experiencing beauty. In such cases, experiences are based on the knowledge of the object to which beauty is seen. Philosophy of Kant laid emphasis on the rationality in judgement of Art. For him the person whose thought and conduct are guided by reason is rational. In case of aesthetics, Western Philosophers found two paradoxes 'form' and 'content' as important which are inseparable from each other. At the same time some Western scholars felt a need of invoking imagination as a distinct mental faculty which is contrary to Philosophers like Kant and Hegel who argue that imagination is not associative but constituent part of the nature of the experience. On the other hand Philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre focuses on the creative imagination that human beings may exercise and upon which aesthetic experience depends.

Indian aesthetics is derived from Sanskrit Poetics which talks about Rasa Siddhanta which was developed by Bharata in "Natyshashtra" Natyashasta presents the Aesthetic concepts of rasa-s and their associate bhava-s. Bharata's theory was applicable to poetry and theatre then. For him Rasa is the enjoyment of flavours that arise from the proper

preparation of ingredients and qualities of ingredients. There are eight rasas (sentiments) recognized in drama and dramatic representation which are: erotic, comic, pathetic, furious, heroic, terrible, odious, and marvellous, etc. In addition to that, Kashmiri Aesthetician Anandawardhana introduces ninth rasa i.e. shanta-rasa.

Modern Indian critics distinguish imagination and experiences separately. For them human experiences could not be measured on the basis of imagination and particularly through these nine broad areas of emotions. Since the Indian classical theory is based on the faculty of imagination, therefore, these nine rasas too are insufficient to recognize the practical experiences based reality from new creative responses. Indian classical theory does not deal with the moral issues created on the basis of graded society and modern complicated society in globalization. While discussing the issue of novel R.B. Patankar also finds this theory is inadequate to express our emotions, he says: "Sanskrit poetics does not tell us how to discuss the moral problems presented in a contemporary novel, and, further, how to evaluate that novel in the light of this discussion." (Devy 2007: p393) Dalit Aaesthetics and classical aesthetics stand on two poles of conflict i.e. on the guiding principle of its aesthetics. "In the typical manner of Dalit aggression they said that if pleasure was the guiding principle of Brahmanism, pain would be the essence of Dalit aesthetics. This pain would help them imagine their history and lot in life impel them forward to seek redressal and revenge."(Saksena 2013: p41)

Modern Indian Aesthetics based on Sanskrit and Western Aesthetics, also recognizes beauty in the literary art, which again is related to these rasas. Present Indian literary criticism is diluted in Western Aesthetics in such a way that Indian criticism and creative writing fits into that framework

completely. The Aesthetics of Marathi, Hindi and Indian literature in English are based on the feeling of pleasure and empathy aroused by viewing the object. The idea of beauty has been discussed in Marathi literature much by B.C. Mardhekar, Sharatchandra Muktibodh, and M.P. Renge, etc. and pioneered the Aesthetics of Marathi Literature. In Hindi Namvarsingh, Nagendra, Mahavirprasad Dwivedi, Acharya Nandkishor, Dr. Girirajsingh Agrawal, and Sudhir Pachauri, etc. put some important concept in Aesthetics of literature. But all these theories seems inadequate in dealing or justifying the literature of marginalized since they are revolving round the rasa siddhanta. Sanjay Saksena also in his article *Aesthetics of Revolution: Dalit literature and Art*, shows his disagreement with validity of rasa theory for Dalit literature. He says:

> "The rasa theory of aesthetics which form the backbone of Indian aesthetics has been found to be inadequate to describe the Dalit sensibility and it has been proposed that it should be amended. A new rasa should be included to accommodate the Dalits but there are those among Dalits who would not like to have anything to do with it for in the main it bypasses them. Rasa theory is spiritual and the Dalit does not wish to share this other worldliness because in such experiences of beauty his losses are written." (Saksena 2013: p41)

Dalit Literature and its Aesthetics

In the light of such a criticism that Dalit Literature should be strictly treated as common literature, it is important here to see whether the above explanation of Aesthetics is applicable to Dalit literature? Therefore, we have to first look into the basis of Dalit Literature. The basis of Dalit Literature is broadly based on two important premise i.e. (i) Socio-Cultural background of Dalit Literature and (ii) Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar's Thoughts as its foundation

First Premise

Dalit Literature is the literature of untouchables, marginalised, broken, suppressed, and exploited people of India. Dalits in Indian social hierarchy are victims of poverty, slavery, illiteracy, ignorance, injustice, inequality, atrocities and all kinds of humiliation. Through this literature Dalits express their pain and sufferings of the ages. This expression is expressed in the form of anger, cry, and sometimes unusual words (foul and abusive language). Dalit Literature is the literature of protest and shed light on the relationship of the powerful versus powerless, oppressor versus oppressed, and exploiters versus exploited, etc. Bitter life experiences, struggle of identity, and thoughts of liberty, equality and fraternity of Dalits found expression in various genres of literature such as poetry, short stories, novels, plays, autobiographies, criticism (prose), etc.

Second Premise

The Conversion of 1956 is the turning point in the life of Dalits particularly for their Literary Creativity. Dr. Ambedkar's first thought to Conversion of 1924 and his declaration of leaving Hinduism in Yeola (Maharashtra) Conference in 1935 plays a crucial role in determining Dalit Movements in Maharashtra. It was the beginning of rationalism in Dalit understanding. Buddha was introduced to Dalits by Dr. Ambedkar much earlier to conversion through his periodicals, research materials and speeches. Therefore pre conversion Dalit Literature was also influenced of the non-Hindu Philosophies. Buddhism as the indigenous religion was chosen by Dr. Ambedkar and Dalits on the ground of its Human Values, keeping human being at its centre and not the god or religion, equal opportunities to everyone despite of caste and creed for their progress and development. Growth of man to man relationship on the grounds of social values like liberty equality, fraternity and

justice and values of Humanism like Compassion, Metta, Love, Equanimity and Empathy were the essential principles of Buddhism. Many Dalit writers and critics agreed with the fact that Conversion brought a new liberation movement in the form of Dalit Literature in the post Ambedkar era. According to Sharankumar Limbale, "the mass conversion to Buddhism brought about a revolutionary change in the consciousness of Dalit society, the historical change in the beginning of new liberation struggle. Dalits found a new cultural dimension in Buddhism, and it had an emerging impact on the development of Dalit Literature. (Limbale 2004: pp41-42).

The ultimate aim of Dalit Movement initiated by Dr. Ambedkar was to emancipate last of the Dalit of the country who was in psychologically dehumanised state for centuries. Also Buddha's Philosophy aims at the liberation of man from sufferings and pain. Buddha was also the crusader of human values and attacked upon the ill traditions and prejudiced social division in the contemporary times. Therefore, the Conversion of 1956 is the meeting point of these two movements which reflects in a merged form in Dalit Literature. Dalits found Ambedkarism and Buddhism as the two sides of a coin having the same objectives. Dalit writers connected Dalit emancipation movement with social reformers like Mahatma Phule, Periyar, AyothiThass, Narayana Guru, etc. According to Omprakash Valmiki, "the philosophical foundation of Dalit literature is life struggle of Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Phule's Philosophical foundation." (Valmiki 2005: p53)

Critical responses of Dalit Writers to Conventional Aesthetics

In case of Dalit Literature, poetry, short stories and autobiographies are much in vogue among Dalit writers for they are a powerful medium of expressing their pain and

suffering of ages. Comparatively the outcome in novels and folk literature is in slower pace. Right from its beginning this literature is hammering the typical Indian social hierarchy *viz.* caste system. With a thought of liberty, equality, fraternity, and social justice in their mind, Dalit writers express their heart felt emotions which were suppressed for thousands of years. Dalit Literature explores the struggle of identity of Dalits in India like the Blacks in America. Therefore entertainment of reader is not the motif of this literature, but to stir the mind of reader with crude realities of Dalit's life in India. In this discussion one thing is clear that these are certainly uncommon experiences that come in the way of Dalits.

In the eyes of Dalit writer-critics, measures of Common Literary Aesthetics may not be justifiable to this literature on such premise. Omprakash Valmiki points out that "Aesthetics of Hindi literature is based on Sanskrit and Western Aesthetics. Therefore its measures proved inadequate in the evaluation of Dalit literature. The basis of Sanskrit literature is Feudalistic and Brahmanistic approach. So also, Western Literary Aesthetics is based on Capitalism and Feudalism" (Valmiki 2005: p45) Sharankumar Limbale also says that "Dalit literature is a new literary stream of the post-independence period. Not only is it new, its forms and purpose too different from those of savarna Marathi literature. Therefore, it cannot be appraised using traditional aesthetics." (Limbale 2004: p115) Both these writers are in fact trying to emphasise the point that Dalit Literature has something of an uncommon aspect from the conventional literature which makes it unique that is none other than Dalit Consciousness or Dalit Chetana.

Neerav Patel also in the light of 'Aesthetics of Dalit Poetry' defended it. According to him beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. Also the history of literature had suggested

that different socio-economic conditions give birth to diverse literatures and each is born with its distinct aesthetics. A true and genuine literature was always beautiful even if it portrays the ugliest reality of life, most evil nature of mankind. And it was the lot of Dalit Poetry to depict the unwholesome part of that life that deprives a section of people of their human dignity and human right.

Debate on Authorship of Dalit Literature

During the last few decades a debate started amongst Dalit and non-Dalit writers on the issue of the authorship of Dalit Literature, as to who can write Dalit Literature. The debate erupted on the claim of non-Dalit writers that non Dalits writings on Dalit issues could be considered as Dalit Literature. Dalit poet, novelist and writer Sharankumar Limbale defines Dalit Literature as: "by Dalit literature, I mean writing about Dalits by Dalit writers with a Dalit consciousness. The form of Dalit literature is inherent in its Dalitness, and its purpose is obvious, to inform Dalit society of its slavery, and narrate its pain and suffering to upper caste Hindus."(Limbale 2004:p49) Limbale here clearly pointed out that Dalit Literature is a literature written by Dalits only.

Limbale's definition delimits Dalit Literature. Noted Dalit poet and autobiographer Omprakash Valmiki also sounds similar to Limbale. He observes: "According to many intellectual, creative writers, and critics, it is not necessary to be a Dalit to write about Dalits. They argue that it is not necessary to be a horse to write upon a horse. But Dalit writers are not agreed to such arguments. Without realizing the pain of the horse, its external portrayal would be like fantasizing sketches of its emotions. What sort of emotion that tired, hungry and thirsty horse keeps for his owner that horse only could express" (Valmiki 2004: p36). The arguments of Dalit writers are certainly logical but the

intensity in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and many Dalit characters portrayal by Munshi Premchand in Hindi novels like *Godan* and short story *Kafan* certainly provokes the thought that may not reach its aim.

Dalitness Redefined

The Black has a pain of racial discrimination, a physical identity of marginalization. But Black is treated as beauty by Afro-Americans now. Therefore, the previous sorry feeling about the word Black now has undergone transformation; it is identity of pride and self-esteem for them now. Similarly the connotation Dalit has undergone a change. Although a debate is still on amongst the writers and intellectual for the use of term Dalit many started using term the Ambedkarite Literature. Noted writer Dr. Yashwant Manohar is the frontrunner of this stand. But a large number of writers in almost all the regional languages still upheld the connotation Dalit which bound all the marginalized communities together.

Dalit Literature is the reflection of its Dalitness. A Dalit who has lost his confidence and pride being a human being carries Dalitness. It's an inner nature of weakness or inferiority complex in his psyche originated of caste base discrimination and stigma of low self-esteemed. According to James Messey, it is indicative of inner nature and state of mind of a Dalit which they have reached by the ongoing oppression of the caste and social system. Waman Nimbalkar also found Dalitatva (Dalitness) as an oppressed mentality so he opined it to be denounced:

> "The most important point in Dalit view is to get rid of silly ideas based on castes and social inequality in the name of God and religion. It comes topmost in Dalit priorities. Dalit literature is a word that restrains all exploiters. Dalitatva is not a symbol that has been imposed on the heads of or garlanded around the neck of those who have been kept Dalits. It is a

> term for all heinous and inhuman exploitation, of all sorts of above mentioned exploitation, committed at the hands of the exploiters." (Nimbalkar 2006: p59)

This stigma of Dalitness also has undergone change during Dalit Literary Movement in the later period. Dalits now started finding beauty in the connotation. It is the new identity after Dr. Ambedkar's Upliftment Movement and Mass Conversion to Buddhism. Dalitness has got an identity of Aesthetic beauty. The Socio-Economic and Cultural Liberty Movement of Dalits has got a distinct identity in the political environ of the country. Therefore, Dalits have come out of the inferiority stick to the connotation. According to Dr. S. K. Paul,

> "Dalitness is essentially a means towards achieving a sense of cultural identity. The inferiority complex based on "to be Dalit" has now disappeared. Now Dalitness is a source of confrontation. This change has its essence in the desire for justice for all mankind. Dalitness is a matter of appreciating the potential of one's total being. Thus individual, culture, social burden and Dalitness cannot be isolated... for this new Dalit individual, social and cultural freedom has come because of his self-elevation and self-identification... Today's Dalit literature rejects the degraded Hindu social set up. Dalit writers relentlessly expose the inhumanities and prejudices of caste, society and instill a new social and cultural consciousness." (Paul 2012: p35)

In the life of modern Dalits after the independence of the country, the Constitutional Rights and Dr. Ambedkar's Conversion to Buddhism along with his millions of followers brought a revolutionary change in their Socio-Cultural ideals and ideas. The new identity as a common Indian citizen, free from the stigma of untouchability and energized with The Atrocity Act in favour, Dalits enjoy Human Values in the new environ. Therefore, Dalitness has transformed into

an identity connecting all marginalized communities of the country, so it is Symbolic of Unique Unity.

Elements of Dalit Literary Criticism

Dalit literature has different Socio-Cultural Tradition of Movement unlike conventional literature. Therefore, Dalit Literary Criticism based on some essential elements born out of Dalit Movements of emancipation began with Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Phule and which connects them with the rich tradition of Buddhist Culture. These elements are:

a. Dalit Chetana (Consciousness)
b. Rejection
c. Protest
d. Suffering (Pain)
e. Agitation
f. Revolt

Dalit Consciousness "Chetana"

Dalit Literature is a Life Oriented Literature which is born out of Dalit Consciousness. Dalit Consciousness is the Consciousness of Values as a human being. It indicates awareness to a Dalit's right to live a life of dignity; it seeks liberty in the context of political, socio-economic, and cultural aspects. The intensity in the Dalit Movement takes its momentum with Dr. Ambedkar's massive work of Dalit emancipation. On the basis of Dr. Ambedkar's influence on Dalit Movement, Dalit Consciousness reflects two broad aspects: First, acceptance to the human values i.e. liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice proclaimed by Buddha and upheld by Dr. Ambedkar and Second, rejection of unjust society and tradition of oppression. Dalit consciousness according to Sharankumar Limbale:

> "... is a belief in rebellion against caste system, recognizing the human being as its focus. Ambedkarite thought is the

> inspiration for this consciousness. Dalit consciousness makes slaves conscious of their slavery. Dalit consciousness is an important seed for Dalit literature. It is separate and distinct from the consciousness of other writers. Dalit literature is demarcated as unique because of this consciousness." (Limbale 2004: p32)

Dalit Consciousness is related with the awakening of Dalit Community with the rise of Dr. Ambedkar. Dr. Pradeep Sharma in his book *Dalit Politics and Literature,* therefore, found it as Political Consciousness that is expressed politically during the course of the Dalit Movement. According to him,

> "It is participative having significant impact on the political system and its actors, both subjectively and objectively. It connotes self-image vis-à-vis other individuals and communities, their relationship with socio-political locations and their linkages/connectivity with socio-eco-political and cultural structures of society. Political consciousness characterises an individual's or community's cognitive comprehensibility of its objective conditions as well as subjective awareness that, in turn, forms through social experiences, political struggles and cultural traits." (Sharma 2006: p55)

Dr. Sharma also found that Dalit Consciousness was guided by the Ambedkarite ideology, programmes, leadership and organization and incorporates both institutionalized and non-institutionalized individual and collective actions initiated and adopted by the Community to achieve desired goals. Scholar Dr. Vandana Pathak also found the Socio-Economic grounds of the Dalit Consciousness. According to her:

> "At the heart of Dalit consciousness is an individual, a human being. It believes in human dignity, self-respect of an individual. It has natural, spontaneous affection, fellow feeling for people at the grass roots of the society. Dalit consciousness reflects an ability to note subtly Dalit pain and

> agony. It is expression of protest and rejection. It is expression of negation. It is against all kinds of exploitation...it has a close affinity with Dalit struggle. From Dr. Ambedkar's point of view, Dalit consciousness is an expression of freedom from slavery. This consciousness is not restricted to an individual but has ability to take the entire community in its fold. It is self-motivated consciousness. It has an inherent association with Dalit experience and thus possess economic and social basis. It is based on Dalit sensitivity. It ignites in Dalits spirit to fight against injustice" (Pathak 2016: pp 169-170)

According to Omprakash Valmiki, concern of Dalit Chetana is deeply related with the questions like, Who am I? What is my Identity? These were the questions that provided impetus to creativity of Dalit writers. He further extended its meaning and scope; the expression of exploitation, sufferings and pain only is not Dalit Chetana or portrayal of Dalit's pain in emotional and tearful words, Dalit Chetana is directly related with the vision which break the code of Dalit's socio-cultural and historical frame. For Valmiki, Dalit Chetana receives impetus from Dr. Ambedkar's Life Philosophy, therefore, he put forwards principle premise of Dalit Chetana:

i. "On the issues of liberation and freedom acceptance to Dr. Ambedkar's Philosophy
ii. Acceptance to Buddha's non-belief in god, anatta, scientific rationalism and rejection to rituals and ill traditions
iii. Oppose to Varna System, casteism, and communalism
iv. Not separation but support to fraternity
v. On the sides of liberty and social justice
vi. Resolved for social change
vii. Oppose to capitalism in economic field
viii. Oppose to feudalism and Brahmanism
ix. Oppose to hero-worship
x. No-agreement with the definition of epics given by RamchandraShukla
xi. Oppose to conventional aesthetics

xii. Supports to casteless and classless society
xiii. Oppose to linguistic and gender bias" (Valmiki 2005: p31)

These points establish the connection between Dalit Chetana and Literary Creativity by Dalits. Therefore Dalit Consciousness is the line of separation between conventional literature and Dalit Literature. Most of the conventional literature is relied on imagination and fancy with a touch of reality, but on the other Dalit Literature portrays realities in a Dalit's life. From the above discussion it is crystal clear that the basis of Dalit Literature is different from Conventional literature. And the absence of Dalit Consciousness in Conventional literature indicates that the popular aesthetic measures are inadequate to evaluate Dalit Literature. It was an outcome of a suggestion from the Traditional Aestheticians, that, some new rasas or sentiments may be introduced in the present day Literary Aesthetic Criticism. But the question that still persists, could such new introduced rasas be adequate to evaluate Dalit Literature, since it is introduced by non-Dalit Aesthetician? Dalit writers persistently say that Dalit Literature written by Dalits should be recognised as Dalit Literature. This is original creative literature by Dalits. Whereas other writers' writings related to a Dalit's life and experiences based on imagination, lacks the intensity and real Dalit Consciousness may not be called as Dalit literature. Dalit writers are not in agreement to compromise reality with imagination, and Dalit Consciousness with fantasy!

In case of Dalit Literary Criticism, non- Dalit writer can also evaluate Dalit literature. But he should have that soft corner to the Dalits in the light of their caste based problems in India. If a critic is unaware of Dalits' socio-cultural, political and economic problems in India, and ignores the facts of history, he may not evaluate this literature impartially. Omprakash Valmiki comments: "If a critic is

unaware of Dalit community's life and also unaware of inflammation of their experiences, he may not evaluate with faith and impartially, for this it is not necessary to suffer the experience of Dalits, instead his deep study of social system in India, social plight, Indian culture, etc. are very important." (Valmiki 2005: p59)

It is very important to note here that the criticism from non- Dalit writers should be on balancing grounds of new Dalit Aesthetics. He should bear in his mind some extra-literary considerations to understand Dalit Chetana.

Dalit Consciousness in Poetry and Buddhism

What made Dalit poetry unique is its Dalit Chetana i.e. Consciousness. Buddha's teaching give importance to the realisation of suffering and knowledge of its existence and causes. This realisation leads the men towards awakening with wisdom and annihilation of suffering. Dalits who awakened by Dr. Ambedkar for the socio-political and fundamental rights to live life of dignity, they show significant awareness about their plight and determination to end their slavery with united struggle. Therefore Dalit consciousness is the realisation of Dalit as their identity and their attachment to the liberation of fellow Dalits. According to Laura Brueck, "it refers to the notion of political awareness in the sense of consciousness raising among certain section of Dalit population at other times refer to a collective notion of identity among diverse Dalit communities." (Brueck 2006)

Dalit poetry is mainly poetry of Dalit consciousness which separate it from the traditional poetry. Dalit poetry therefore is identical with the Dalit Chetana. In Namdeo Dhasal's poem "Leaving the house" the Dalit consciousness expressed intensely where he questions the social system as to why the suffering of Dalits only increases:

"Gimme an answer: answer me; give, I say

Prostitutes multiply: question mark, question mark, question mark
Slums multiply: question mark, question mark, question mark
Hunger Deaths multiply: question mark, question mark, question mark
Beggars multiply: question mark, question mark, question mark
Men without work multiply: question mark, question mark, question mark" (Anand 1992: p50)

In Jyoti Lanjewar's poem *Mother*Dalit Consciousness indicating the lowest of lowest in the Dalit community was politically aware and ready to fight for their rights:

"I have seen you
At the front of the long march
The end of your saree tucked tightly at the waist
Shouting "change the name",
Taking the blow of the police stick on your upraised hands
Going to jail with head held high (Anand 1992: p102)

Dr. Yashwant Manohar's poetry is full of Dalit consciousness and provocative. He not only brings energy and spirit of fighter for social cause but at the same time expresses intense feeling for liberation. He becomes the voice of the Dalit.

"I'm burning with a feeling of revolt
And I call out to you
I will write the poem of revolt on your sword.
Today I have become a storm come with me!
I reach out to you give me your hand" (Anand 1992: p113)

KeshavMeshram is being hostile to God who was responsible for the Dalits slavery and dehumanised state, he cursed him with his realisation of injustice to him done by the system

"Bastered"

Would you chop a whole cart of wood
For a single piece of land
"Would you wipe the sweat from your bony body
With your mother's ragged sari?
"Would you wear out your brothers and sisters?
For your father's fix?
Would you work as pimp
To keep him in booze?" (Anand 1992: p118)

In Waman Nimbalkar's *Caste* his consciousness about his caste being low traumatize him. He felt helpless in the hostile situation where nobody was to protect him and his family, disturbs him severely:

"When I knew nothing, I knew
My caste was low
The Patil had kicked my father
Cursed my mother
They did not even raise their head
But I felt this "caste" in my heart." (Anand 1992: p122)

Dalit consciousness is the notion of being awakened for their plight and injustices upon them as Dalit; therefore, it is deeply ingrained in Dalit psyche reflected in their poetry. Dalit poetry gives way to this consciousness which is unique to all and the same bind them as one. It brings together all the marginalised and bereaved under unjust caste system towards the egalitarian society reflected in Buddhism and Dr. Ambedkar's life mission.

Dalit Consciousness in Autobiography and Buddhism

Dalit Consciousness is prominently seen in Dalit autobiographies everywhere. Dalits were aware about their position in the caste system. The families discussed in these autobiographies were going parallel to the Dalit Movement in the country particularly in the state of Maharashtra. Therefore, these Dalits started getting oriented about their

human rights. The consciousness was certainly connected with their rights and forging their identity.

Shatabai Kamble narrated her mother's approach towards her children validate this point. It was true that the family was living in utter poverty at the same time this illiterate mother was also aware that if her children get schooling theycan reach good position in the society. She seemed highly aware about the education and its effects. "To my Aaye- Appa who worked the entire day in the hot glaring son, hungry and without water and through the doggery of labour with hunger pinching their stomach, educated me and brought me from darkness" (Rege 2006: p157)

Jatava's father died when he was barely 11 years of age. His father wanted him to get good education and career. His untimely death brought his family back foot. Jatava had to leave her schooling and help her mother in earning wages. But he was not away from his dream of educating himself. He was looking into possible sources of work with which he could continue his education shows his spirit and consciousness.

> "The cruel law of nature had left us on the road to work for our livelihood. However, the Baniya's suggestion reminded me of forgotten dream of my father. But I had to work with my mother to earn something. To be self-dependent was an impossible idea. At times I thought of repairing shoes, a lucrative job, but did not appeal to my conscience". (Jatava 1999: p10)

Dalit young boys in the influence of Dalit movements and other political sources realised that the caste they are belonged to and the poverty as a curse they are living was man made, they were tools of oppression. The names given to Dalits were derogatory whereas names were given to upper castes boys were meaningful and beautiful. The stigma of Dalitness reflected through Dayapawar's name "Dagadu"

always depressed him. He started hating his name indicating his Dalitness. This realisation was the beginning of his consciousness. "Consider this: my real name is Dagdu, you've forgotten that, right? So have I. but that's the name you'll see in the school register. No one in the city knows me as Dagdu. Who knows whether even my wife and children know the name? Since the childhood I've hated this name". (Pawar 2015: p4)

UrmilaPawars grandfather was an ex-soldier, he was highly conscious about his status and respect. During various ritual and traditional cores Dalits used to invite Bhata for performing those rituals as a part of tradition. But during such rituals Bhats never entered the Dalit ghettos. They used to climb on the trees nearby and utter some words and collected money, grocery, dry fruits, etc at the hand of their servants. This was insulting to Pawar's grandfather. So he called up a meeting and decided to stop such humiliation at the hand of these Bhats instead they decided to perform their rituals of their own.

> "Hari felt it was humiliating to have the rituals conducted from a distance (by Brahmins). It must have been the influence of Mahatma Jotiba Phule's Satyashodhak movement in 1873. So during one of his visits to the village, Hari called a meeting of the villagers. They decided that in future they would perform all the rituals themselves." (Pawar 2003: p13)

Omprakash Valmiki got his consciousness from his father. From the school days only he used to contemplate upon his and his community's plight.

> "I have not been able to forget their bitter memories. They flash in my mind like lightening every now and then. Why is it a crime to ask for the price of one's labour? Those who keep singing the glories of democracy use the government machinery to quell the blood flowing in our veins. As though

> we are not citizen of this country. The weak and the helpless have been suppressed for thousands of years just in this manner. There is no out coming of how many talents have been wiped out by deception and treachery." (Valmiki 2003: p19)

One incidence in Valmiki's life is indicative of Dalit consciousness. Valmiki community was assigned with the disposing off the dead cattle as bounded unpaid labour. Once in the absence of his brother and father he had to help his uncle in disposing off the dead Bulluck of BrahmadevTaga. He had to skin the animal as instructed by his uncle. While experiencing the mental trauma he writes:

> "My hands were trembling as I held the knife. I was trapped in a hard place. Chacha taught me how to ply the knife. That day something broke inside me. I skinned the bullock under the chacha's guidance. I felt I was drowning in a swamp. I was being drawn into the very quagmire that I had tried to escape from. The wounds of the torment that I suffered with chacha on that hot afternoon are still fresh on my skin." (Valmiki 2003: p35)

Another incidence in the Valmiki'sJoothan indicates the Dalit consciousness started as awakening amongst his caste men. Once Omprakash was taken forcibly to work in the sugarcane field by Fauzasingh Tyagi inspite of the fact that next day Ompraksh was writing his examination. On the other hand his mother drops rotis from distance in his hand to eat. He felt insulted with such a treatment as low. He threw those rotis down and ran towards his home. On listening the incidence his father became infuriated with strong Dalit consciousness. "He seldom asked me to do anything by way of help because he wanted me to be able to focus single mindedly on my education. He constantly said that I should improve my cate by getting an education...Pitaji had picked up a stick to go and fight Fauza. Ma had stopped him with great difficulty." (Valmiki 2003: P 58) Later same strong

Dalit consciousness was shown by the basti people when they came to know about the incidence. "The incidence had an impact on the entire basti. People had started to refuge wage-less work. Something was simmering a change was about to take place." (Valmiki 2003: p 58)

Schooling brought wisdom to young Limbale. He understood that eating dead animals was the cause of their suffering:

> "I developed an aversion to dead animals and detested those who ate their flesh. This hatred spread like epidemic among our gang of boys. Whenever an animal was being skinned we deliberately went there and grabbed its legs. When it was skinned we pissed on it, threw soil and dung on it so that no one would eat the meat. Even so Keramai used to carry off the meat, and wash and cook it. We felt that no one should eat the meat of a dead animal." (Limbale 2005: p19)

Dalit consciousness clearly seen in Limbale when he joindayanand college, Solapur. He maintained:

> "While studying in college I was mentally aflame. I was growing amidst a conflagration. The roots of the movement were settling more firmly. Injustice towards us was assuming a new meaning. We were awakening under a new consciousness which was becoming more pervasive day by day." (Limbale 2005: p83)

In yet another incidence Limbale show his self-esteem and Dalit Consciousness. Limbale and his sisters were born of illicit relations of his mother with rich Patils. They suffer a lot while growing in the community as illicit children. He didn't want such tradition to go on. Therefore, when he saw his sister Nagi was engaged with Nandu the patil like his mother he became infuriated. "I sternly asked Nagi to get back home and began to beat her. I was wild with anger. In reality I was fighting the whole village. I was trying to be a

man with self-esteem but Nagi was letting me down." (Limbale 2005: p85)

Narendra Jadhav's father Damu was under the influence of Dr. Ambedkar's movement. Therefore, he started rejecting low works like disposing off the dead cattle, dead men etc. assigned to Dalits unpaid. Once, a police forced him to stay near the well during entire night alone where a dead body was floating. Also on next day he was asked to take the dead body out as it was his work being Dalit. Resisting to this work, he was severely thrashed by police. Humiliated Damu decided to leave his village and returned to Mumbai where at least he could find work of dignity. His decision was found mere foolishness by his family members because with this he might lose the right to gather Baluta. And he and his family might suffer hunger. But Damu was firm on his decision. He was justifying his point of his supporting wife Sonu reflects his Dalit consciousness as: we must have self-respect. "We must have dignity as human beings. How can I take to begging from door to door? Baluta is our right, they proudly claim! My foot! Have you seen how they throw the food? I don't want right as a dog. I want my human right." (Jadhav 2003: p18) later he justified his rejection of police's demand. "I look back on my behaviour with the Fauzdar. I had not done anything wrong in defying his authority. Babasaheb had inspired us to stand up and reclaim our dignity. I had done just that. (Jadhav 2003: p25)

The Dalit Consciousness was highly reflected in the Dalit autobiographies in both pre and post Conversion to Buddhism narration. The post conversion to Buddhism narration was depicted with high intensity of consciousness in these autobiographies. The very consciousness was ingrained in the Buddhist culture adopted by Dalits under Dr. Ambedkar's leadership evident in these autobiographies.

Rejection and Protest as Nature of Dalit Literature

The rationalist thoughts begin with the Buddha in the country. Buddha attacked on the contemporary superiority of Brahmanism and dogma of religion. He rejected the illogical and unscientific beliefs, superstitions, etc. on the basis of rationality and logic. His interest was in the liberation of man from all kinds of sufferings. Therefore, he protested against the religious methods of oppression and authority of religion for getting imaginary salvation to men. Buddha's philosophy is comprised of rejection and protest which was upheld by Dr. Ambedkar. "He ruled over the hearts of the Dalit community as first Dalit writer to protest against untouchability, God, religion, spiritualism, rites and rituals and promoted rational, scientific philosophy of life." (Nimbalkar 2006: p56) according to WamanNimbalkar Dalit in this country was terrible insulted, therefore, Dalit literature brought Dalit at its centre as Buddha brought a man in his philosophy as centre. For him in Dalit literature humanism of a man, his all-round development, his conscientious and moral behaviour thoughts and his complete liberation is considered as its nucleus. For Nimbalkar Dalit Literature, thus, protests against and denounces Dalitatva. Commenting upon the rejection and revolt of Dalit literature Limabale agrees the other Dalit writers on the similar thesis,

> "This rejection is aimed at the unequal order which has exploited Dalits. Its form is double-edged-rejecting the unequal order, and demanding equality, liberty, fraternity and justice...revolt is the stage that follows anguish and rejection. 'I am a human, I must receive all the rights of human beings'- such is the consciousness that gives birth to this revolt" (Limbale 2005: p31)

According to Nimbalkar Dalit writer wants to paint a picture of present life with the colours and brush given by Dr. Ambedkar in his hands to create a beautiful, lofty and

humanitarian picture of man. Commenting upon the aspect of protest and rejection in Dalit literature Neha Arora says: "Dalit literature opposes the prevalent thoughts. It is creative and establishes an alternative for values and social structures. It has a dual purpose to paly- to destroy and to recreate." (Arora 2013: pp 154-155)

Suffering (Pain)

Suffering as the essential element has immense importance in Dalit Literary Criticism. Dalits in Indian society got nothing other than suffering in the name of religious culture and caste based social hierarchy. Sufferingof marginalisation, dehumanisation, insults in the name of untouchables, poverty, ignorance, atrocities, helplessness, slavery, etc. only came to Dalit lives. Therefore, these are the elements Dalit writers discuss in their literature frequently. Buddha begins his teachings with the four noble truths, wherein suffering is the first element in human life Buddha wants a man to realize. Dalits sufferings are not natural, but they are deliberately forced upon them. Dr. Ambedkar's Movement started to make the Dalit realize about their slavery and plight. Dalit poetry, story and autobiography give way out to the suppressed suffering of Dalit gathered in the collective conscious of Dalits. So Dalit criticism has accepted sufferings as the essential element. Noted Marathi critic Dr. Bhachandra Phadke and Dalit playwright Datta Bhagat consider pain as the essential thread for the evaluation of Dalit Literature. Also Marathi critic Dr. Shatrugna Jadhav found Dalit autobiography as the complete examples of suffered lives. For him this suffering is adopted in Dalit criticism to evaluate its literature. Other critical theories have not taken suffering with such an elevated aspect.

Revolt

Revolt is considered as central element in the Dalit criticism. Revolt as the element of Dalit movement began with the Dr. Ambedkar's movement. He made them realise that the dehumanised state of Dalits was not the curse by any god, but it was simply injustice for undue socio-economic advantages. The caste system was structured and developed in watertight compartment leaving no space to come out of it. Therefore, Dalits in his leadership understood that their slavery could not be end without revolting against it. They revolted against every that institutionalized objects which were responsible for their untouchability and dehumanised state. They became hostile to institutionalised objects like, caste system, religion, values and morality of that religion, God-God-Goddesses, history of oppression, scriptures like Manusmriti, literary values supporting the caste system, and social values proclaiming its divinity. Dalit literature creates images of sufferings from their experience and brings forward the community revolting against elements of slavery. Revolt generated automatically in Dalit literature, therefore, it is a fundamental aspect.

Agitation

The philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar's Dalit Movement was based upon three important foundations, i.e. educate, agitate and organise. Dalit Literature adopted these foundations to their literary movement. In the ancient times Buddha started agitation against institutionalised religious system which considers man as pure and impure, low and high. Also, From Mahatma Phule a tradition was begun rejecting the dehumanised state of life tied with the unjust religious culture and socio-economic exploitation. This tradition got its intense form during Dr. Ambedkar's life time. Dalits gathered under Dr. Ambedkar's leadership to get their human rights, liberty, equality, fraternity and social justice

restored. They started nationwide agitation from every front of their life. So agitation became the essence of their movement, so also for literary movement. In the conventional literature agitation may be depicted to show one's struggle against difficult situation in his life, whereas, in Dalit life his agitation is to get his human rights, dignity and socio-economic status restored. Therefore, agitation depicted in these two literatures is different. So agitation occurred as element in Dalit literature accepted as one of the threads in its evaluation.

Buddhism: The Base of Dalit Literary Tradition and Aesthetics:

Much before conversion Dr. Ambedkar published his three important works, viz. *Who were the Shudras, The Untouchables, and Revolution and Counter Revolution.* According to him to understand another book *The Buddha and His Dhamma* these three books are to be considered, because these books establishes the ethnic relationship of present day Dalits (untouchables) with the Buddhist of the ancient times. At the conversion ceremony Dr. Ambedkar announced that the ancestors of present day Dalits were warrior clan, protectors and followers of Buddha, the *Nagas.* In this way, a rich tradition to the Dalit has been rediscovered. Therefore, Buddhism comes to the centre of Dalit literary criticism and aesthetics. Connected with Buddhism Dalit writers started finding their possible mythical heroes from that tradition. Through the book *The Revolution and the Counter Revolution* Dr. Ambedkar established the fact that the history of India was the history of conflicts between Buddhism and Hinduism. Buddhists were defeated in a long span of history as a result of which untouchability was forced upon the Dalits ex-antyaj. The conflict was undertaken by Dalit writers to discover their heroes from the Buddhist kings, Buddha's disciples,

Buddhist Monks and Nuns, etc. these are the sources of mythic heroes of Dalit Literature.

Buddhism influences the traditions of literary, cultural and arts and architecture in the following centuries. The saint's literature in the medieval centuries and their literature seems highly influence of Buddhism. Dr. Bhau Lokhande's doctoral research was based on these premises. Prof. M. B. Chitnis also worked upon Buddhist Philosophy and "proved with evidences that The Gita, Shankaracharya, Dhyaneshwar, Tukaram, like saints were under the influence of Buddhism" (Jadhav 2003: p210) According to Chitnis, "every heritage means from Buddhist culture. I would speak about the Tukarama that giving importance to moral values means to practices, not only to mere thoughts or knowledge but alsowhatever importance have come to social practices was from the Buddhist literature."(Jadhav 2003: p210)

Welfare of a Man was at the centre of Buddha's teachings and his philosophy, therefore, he emphasised more on human values and morality of a man. Dalits who were the followers of Dr. Ambedkar were automatically became the follower of Buddhism. Therefore, within a few decades these converted communities raised up to the level of good standard. Dalit Literature takes the Buddhism as its heritage, so the values and morality adopted as they were in Buddhism. Dalit Literature basically develops on the ground of socio-economic and cultural grounds. The society which they represent has historic connections, therefore, an interdisciplinary approach from the humanities is required to analyse the same. Modern day Dalits in India follows Buddhism in the Aspect of Dr. Ambedkar which he claimed as Navyana. Buddhism dealt in Dalit Literature would be in the light of Dr. Ambedkar's parameter. Here they rejected the tradition of Mahayana and upheld the tradition of Pali and Therawada. Therefore, writers like Prof. R. G. Jadhav

and M. B. Chitnis advise Dalit writers to study Pali and Buddhism. Prof. R. G. Jadhav found it possible to create Dalit aesthetics based on Buddhist values. According to him, ideas expressed directly or indirectly on arts and literature in Buddhist philosophy could be used to develop Buddhist aesthetics in the light of Dalit aesthetics. Necessity of Buddhist philosophy had been felt by all the societies along with Dalits. Therefore, Buddhist aesthetics could be supporting to Dalit aesthetics. He was of the opinion that on the basis of Buddhist aesthetics Dalit aesthetics could be developed.Commenting upon the elevated form of Dalit literature with the Buddhism at its core, Marathi Critic Dr. Shatrugna Jadhav claimed that Dalit Literature has got a rich dimension with the two essential aspects, first, since Dalit Literature has Buddhist Consciousness conducting appreciation with that thread and secondly, writers to take reference of Buddhist Philosophy in the creation of the aspect of profound and morality based literature.

Buddhist Socialism: Liberty Equality, Fraternity and Justice

Dalit Literary Movement was based on the social values to emancipate the Dalit as its ultimate aim. Dalits who embraced Buddhism along with their master saviour Dr. Ambedkar undergone a massive socio-cultural change begins from 1956. The social values which were then adopted in the independent India's constitution, Dr. Ambedkar claimed that these were not taken from the French revolution but they were taken from the teachings of Buddha. Commenting on Dr. Ambedkar's aspects of these social values his biographer Dhananjay Keer maintains,

> "In his philosophy liberty and equality had a place; but he added that unlimited liberty destroyed equality, and absolute equality left no room for liberty. In his philosophy law had a place only as a safeguard against the breaches of liberty and equality, but he did not believe that law can be a guarantee for

> breeches of liberty and equality. He gave the highest place to fraternity as the only real safeguard against the denial of liberty or equality or fraternity-which was another name for brotherhood or humanity, which was again name for religion." (Keer 2009: p459)

Buddha is a source of inspiration to Dalits and Dalit writers since these marginalised people accepted the Dhamma as the way of life. Therefore, social values were started inculcating in the psyche of these people helped forging their identity as Buddhist and buried their deformed identity given by Hindu setup. The literature of these neo Buddhist significantly practice and propagate social values of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice through their writings. According to Waman Nimbalkar Dalit literature "depicts the graph of progress of every man. For the same, it advocates strongly human values such as equality, liberty, fraternity, justice, pradnya (intellect), sheel (character) and Karuna (compassion)." (Nimbalkar 2006: p37) Indian social system was responsible for Dalits oppression therefore Dr. Ambedkar advocated Buddhism with the values in Dhamma. For him "Dhamma to be Saddhamma must pull down all social barriers." (Ambedkar 1997: p279) Dalit literature upheld the values of Buddhist socialism which were advocated by Dr. Ambedkar. According to Baburaobagul, "Dalit literature first promotes man's greatness and man's freedom and for that reason it is an historic necessity." (Bagul 1973: pp56-57) Commenting upon the priority of Dalit literature Omprakash Valmiki says, "Aspect of human liberty and its expression is the priority of Dalit literature. Dalit literature reflects all forms of human liberty. Freedom is not only in aspects of political but it is equally religious, economic and social. Therefore, in the inculcated stream of Dalit literature, freedom is essentially present." (Valmiki 2004: p62)

Buddhist Humanism: Compassion, Love, Metta, Equanimity and Empathy

For the liberation of man Buddha gave another set of values which were indicative of man's humanism and making him more civilized. Contemporary society was divided into graded pattern therefore; a large section of society was degraded up to the dehumanized state. These marginalised people were needs to be taken care of. Therefore, Buddha developed his Sangha to teach these values to men to bring about a society without discriminations and full of happiness. Buddha's teachings were included Moral Code of Conduct and wisdom. The values of humanism like Compassion, Metta, Love, Equanimity, and Empathy according to him were necessary to society to grow as progressive one. These were the subtle codes of observation which connects man to man despite of any caste and creed.

Dalit Literature is which is the literature of poor oppressed, tortured and marginalised extended its humanism to every such man who was crushed in the social barrier. Dalit Literature is full of such values in the interest of Dalits.

Language of Dalit Literature

There is one more point to observe on the basis of the assembling of words that the Traditional Aestheticians evaluate language in Dalit literature. They found it uncultured, crude and unparliamentarily. Also they found the diction is un-figurative, and coarse and vulgar. This was the reason that Namdeo Dhasal's poems in *Golpitha* was criticised severely. But *Golpitha* proved a classic in Dalit Literature. On the language and the prejudices towards Dalit Literature in the name of its language Dr. Gangadhar Pantavne commented as:

> "Language is the essential element of social interaction. In the society different persons or groups develops their culture. It is through their language. These people sometimes through their mediums of language take pride in standard language, regional language or traditional language. Not necessarily such pride is agreeable. But different groups under the single language promote the social imbalances on the level of language. In that case legacy of culture and civilisation has been attached. Therefore, with the usages like non-sophisticated language, non-Marathi language and rustic language sanctification of their culture and attempt is made to prove others as non-standard and it knowingly or unknowingly it waters the social interactions. I believe language and literature could create social interactions. But the causes for the interactions of language and literature could be responsible. Language of a one group is standard and cultured and other's is non-standard and uncultured, these are unreasonable expressions."(Pantavne 1999: p138)

Dalits live in ghettos outside the town and villages leading a hard life with rough languages. Also their expressions towards injustice are certainly burning, making their language harsh, sarcastic and sometimes the use of abusive words is spontaneous, effective and naturally expected. Such a strong reaction (portraying conventional characters in negative shade) from a character, in their literary work is justifiable in the new Dalit Aesthetics because such reaction is the outcome of protest against injustice. Supporting the language and tone of the Dalit poet Neerav Patel commented as:

> "The Dalit poet has different notion of aesthetic beauty: he believes for example, in the beauty of the arrow that is sharp enough to pierce the evil. The beautifully carved handle of the sword that is blunt is of no use to the Dalit poet, for he is required to strike, and strike hard. He has to destruct the ugly and unjust to construct afresh. The anti-human social system that robs man of his dignity must be purged and overhauled. If his angry poetry takes the form of acidic ink, one can hardly

> blame him for the 'sin'. Victor Hugo says if there is darkness, sins will be committed. Guilty one is not he who commits the sin, but he who causes the darkness." (Patel 2013" pp106-107)

Also Neha Arora in her article *Dalit Literature: The Anubhavas (Experience) Takes Precedence over Anumana (Speculation)* found the language employed by the Dalits is relevant to the literature they are engaged with. According to her since Dalit literature was not of imagination, rather an interface with the harsh realities of life that had emerged from the innumerable sufferings, it pierces deep. Thus, they used the same language as they speak in their real life. By being authentic in their vocabulary, they broke the stagnancy of language. Readers are unaware of the ethos and surroundings in which Dalits reside, where the naked (half-clad) children roam about in the dirty lane. How could their language be beautiful? The language of Dalit literature was prosaic. It talked of their exploitation and suppression and it was quite apt for expressing the lives of Dalits. Hindi Dalit poet and critic Kanwal Bharati in reply to charges levelled upon Dalit Literature on its language and abusive terms says: "Tell me/ rape victim/what will be the language of your mother/ how will be/ living life as a slave/ your father's thought/ dying in the mansion of a Thakur/ what will be the words of your sister/ will they be beautiful?"(Thakur 2009: p 116) According to Kanwal Bharati, Dalit literature was not the literature of abuse. The circumstance in which he lived, abuses were in the same circumstances. The objective of Dalit literature was not to abuse the upper caste people. It was not the enemy to upper caste or in favour of abusing them. It only opposed the system which was cause for the suffering and injustice to Dalits.

Reversing the Myth: The Dalit Standpoint

If we consider that some aesthetic notions in Traditional Aesthetics may be introduced, then how could the original concepts of criticism oppose the traditional ideas? This is better understood with the study of myth. Let us take an example from Indian mythology. Many characters in popular Indian Epics commonly appear in Traditional literature as well as in Dalit literature. But appearance of these characters in these literatures is controversial. For example, Dronacharya appears as an ideal figure (guru) in Traditional literature, but the same Dronacharya appears as a negative character in Dalit literature for his injustice towards Eklavya. Killings of Shambuka in the Ramayana and Karna in the Mahabharata are justified in Traditional literature, but on contrary this is condemned in Dalit literature.Dr. M.N. Wankhede considers Myths are essentials to Dalit literature, but he forbade Dalit writers from accepting of Hindu myths. He wants Dalit writers to evolve new heroes from the history. From the life of Buddha and his disciples too such heroes could be traced or created.Prof. M. P. Rege, M. B. Chitnis and R. G Jadhav also advise Dalit to create myths with the help of Buddhist philosophy and history. According to Neha Arora Dalit literature had evolved new myths and had changed the definition of myths. It had attacked at the established falsehood and had broken the magical/chamatkar. Since it was substantiated experiences, it was credible. It had not hesitated in changing the ancient heroes into modern day villains. According to Harinarayan Thakur in Dalit literature, scriptural myths had been redefined. Myths of lifeand death, myths of disaster and nurture, myths of God and demons, Shambuka, Karna, Eklavya, Sita, Draupadi, Story of Rama, Story of Krishna, etc. had got new meanings and references. Marginalized and side-lined scriptural heroes like Karna, Eklavya, and Shanmbukar portrays as heroes here.

In the light of these examples, we can say that the Aesthetics which throughout the ages appraises Dronacharya, the killings of Shambuka and Karna, also invokes the question 'can the same Aesthetics be applicable to Dalit literature, which uses such mythic in contradiction? Now the question naturally arises as to how the Traditional or Conventional Literary Aesthetics deals with such opposite issues? Answer to this question is certainly negative. Dr. M. N. Wankhede further emphasizes that, "... Indian aesthetics has no potential to evaluate the engrossed sense, there is no danger in abandoning such aesthetics, because Dalit literature will not get justice through such frame based role. (Valmiki 2005: p49)

Redefining Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram

Indian aesthetics takes Satyam Shivam and Sundaram as the Indian common cultural values of literature in general to evaluate it. According to Sharankumar Limbale Satyam i.e. truth is in reality untruth because a Brahmana is born out of Brahma's mouth but shudra born out of his feet. For him this philosophy of oppression and injustice this is untruth. For Limbale, if Hindu scripture have deemed the touch, shadow and speech of Dalit person as defiling and shudras should the upper three varnas, having no right to possess property, prestige and knowledge, such injustice could not be called Shivam. Since Dalits were forced to live an inauspicious, uncultured and untouchable life, if not followed these limitations are liable for severe punishments. Therefore for Limbale such life of Dalits could not be seen as Sundaram. For Limbale "Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram is a foolish concept." (Limbale 2005: p22) Therefore he proposed that it is essential to discuss human values based upon liberty, equality and fraternity. His redefinitions of satyam, shivam and sundaram are:

- "Human beings are first and foremost human-this is satyam
- The liberation of human being is shivam
- The humanity of human being is sundaram" (Limbale 2005: p22)

Motives of Dalit Literature

'Motives of literature may be a debatable subject for conventional literature, but for Dalit literature it is already resolved. Dalit literature is an intense literary movement of protest inspired by Dr. Ambedkar. It accepts the scientific point of view and humanism. It anticipates social revolution towards social change to ensure Dalits equality, liberty, fraternity, morality, justice and equal opportunity. Therefore, certainly, the primary motive of Dalit literature is the complete liberation of Dalit. Prof. Keshav Meshram also opined the same, "it is the journey of that struggling man who dreams to bring new culture a reality."(Jadhav 2003: p206) The Man is the center of Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar's Philosophy. Buddha's entire teachings seek human values to be restored to all without any discrimination. Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Phule's whole life struggle was based on these human values to be restored to neglected, marginalized and oppressed. Dalit writers take up this task to propagate all these movement philosophies through the medium of literature. Therefore to establish casteless society is the most important motive of Dalit Literature. On the motives of Dalit Literature Dr. Yashwant Manohar commented as: "The beauty of complete life and human interaction is to establish the values of liberty, equality and fraternity, to establish democratic socialism and certainty of aspect of art on that line is the motive of Dalit literature." (Jadhav 2003: p206)

The purpose of Dalit Literature is to eradicate blind belief from the society and to set in scientific point of view. Therefore noted Dalit writer Gangadhar Pantavane called it as '*Science of Revolution*'. To give life of dignity and self-respect to all the down trodden and poor according to human values is also an important aspect of Dalit Literature. All genres of Dalit literature are based on truthful experience of various Litterateurs in India. This experience takes precedence over speculation. That's why authenticity and liveliness have become hallmarks of Dalit Literature.

Some other objectives of Dalit Literature are very clear-cut. It effectively challenged the Brahmnical hegemony of literature and it stirred up thinking in Dalit intellectuals. Dalit literature is a vehicle to bring forth a new socio-cultural and literary revolution in India. Dr. Ambedkar embraced Buddhism in 1956 with fellow men, thinking, that this was the only religion, which could uplift Dalits. Dr. Ambedkar wanted to spread and advocate Buddhist humanism. Dalit literature adopted this vision. Through literature, Dalit writers, expected to create a new society which would be casteless and without any discrimination. They too dream of Buddhist India.

Dalit Aesthetics as a New Literary Theory

Dalit literature is a complete literature and unique in status. Being criticized severely by non-Dalit writers, Dalit writers felt urgent need of the Dalit literary theory, which explains nature and motif of this literature, and a framework within which Dalit literature should be read and evaluated. The concept of this new theory is developed in the process of literary creations. Eminent Dalit thinker–writers put this theory in a scattered form through the prefaces of different books and various presidential speeches in literary conferences. Recently Dalit thinker- writers Sharankumar Limbale and Omprakash Valmiki published their books,

Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature and *Aesthetic of Dalit Literature* respectively on Dalit Aesthetics shedding light on this new Dalit Literary Theory i.e. Dalit Aesthetics. A parallel comparison can be made between the Dalit Aesthetics and Black Aesthetics. The Black Aesthetics is also a literary theory by Afro-American writers voicing their protest against the White culture who rejected them.

It is important here to note that all Dalit writers are inspired by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's revolutionary thoughts of social change. Therefore Dalit writers should unite together. Dalit literature is a life oriented literature, life of an individual as well as community. Also, this literature is prominently a literature of social awareness. Therefore, liberty, equality, fraternity, and social justice are the cardinal element of Dalit Aesthetics. In this way the Aesthetics of Dalit literature depends on artists' social awareness and commitment. This monitors how Dalit literature represents realities of the community, its suffering and struggle for social change. Sharankumar Limbale puts some standards for the evaluation of Dalit Literature. They are:

- Artists must be motivated by their experience.
- Artist must socialize their experience.
- Artists' experience must have the strength to cross provincial boundaries.
- Artists' experiences must seem relevant to all time. (Limbale 2005: p120)

These are certainly important standards or measures for the evaluation of Dalit Literature. These points can also serve as guidelines to the critics and writers of Dalit Literature.

The Role of Dalit Aesthetics:

Dalit writers have been engaged in developing separate Dalit aesthetics for last few decades. Prominently among

those are Dr. Yashwant Manohar, Dr. Sharankumar Limbale and Omprakash Valmiki. Dr. Yashwant Monohar is persistent about calling it as Ambedkarite literature and Ambedkarite aesthetics. These writers and other Dalit and non-Dalit critics are agreed upon Buddha, Phuley and Dr. Ambedkar as the source of inspiration to this literature. Buddha's philosophy encircles the welfare of human being and freedom from all kinds of suffering. Dr. Ambedkar adopted the same philosophy for the emancipation of Dalits and establishment of human values broadened it up to every section of society. He brought it into reality with the constitution of India. Dalit literature adopted the vision of Dr. Ambedkar for projecting the complete society towards the welfare of last. Dalit Aesthetics has developed that vision to locate values extracted from the movement of Buddha, Phule and Dr. Ambedkar in the literature. Commenting upon the role of Dalit aesthetics Dr. Yashwant Manohar in his book *Dalit literature: Theory and Form* says: "Beauty is not different from life. Art is born out of life. It comes with the values of life and cannot stand without values learnt from experience. Rhythmic support of disparity cannot become beauty in life and art. Tuning with socialistic, democratic values, right balanced with justice of 'Welfare of Maximum and Happiness to Maximum' (Bahujan Hitay- Bahujan Sukhay) and oppose to the values of fascism are the inner motif of Dalit aesthetics." (Jadhav 2003: p259) Buddha used to advise his disciples to go and work tirelessly for Bahujan Hitay-Bahujan Sukhay; Dalit literature so also Dalit aesthetics adopted that advice as the mission.

Dalit Aesthetics essentially have adopted Buddhist social values of liberty, equality, fraternity, equal opportunity and justice. It also has adopted Buddhist humanism with Compassion, Love, Metta, Equanimity and Empathy. Therefore, Dalit aesthetics accepted evaluation and analysis

of literature based on these values. The richness of any creativity and heroism in characters could be measured on the basis of these elements. Dr. Shatrugna Jadhav firmly opined that if a protagonist of a creative work ignoring Ambedkarite morality or does not establish Ambedkar thought in that case both of that protagonist and work could not be treated as great. He is also of opinion that there should be separate critical method of the Dalit aesthetics for Dalit literature since it has accepted different value system. Commenting upon element of ugly in creative work Dr. Manohar in his book *Rationalistic Aesthetics* says:

> "Beauty is the idea of value. Aesthetics is the ism in the family of rationalistic philosophy. Aesthetics of literature means philosophy of beauty in art as literature and rationalistic aesthetics is none other than aesthetics based upon materialistic philosophy. Whatever is essential, possible come in creative beauty? Essentiality and possibility are the elements of dependent origination. That is Buddha's Pratityasamuppada. That which is not accepted to intellect, not revealing the truth of life which cannot come in creative literature and if appeared in that case that creative work would be turned as ugly." (Manohar 2008: p28)

Here Dr. Manohar is clear about the rationalism as the core element of the aesthetics. Dalit aesthetics adopted that rationalism which comes from the tradition of Buddha, Phule and Dr. Ambedkar. Therefore, the role of Dalit aesthetics is to uphold the rationalism as the element of evaluation and analysis in the Dalit literary creativity and art forms.

Summing Up, Dalit Literature is the literature of Social Change that took its birth from Conversion of 1956. It has high influence of Buddhist Philosophy and Dhamma as a way of life. It is a complete new stream in the post-independent Indian literature, which, is expanding and growing day by day in most of the important Indian

languages. When Dalit Literature very first appeared in Marathi and Hindi Literature it was not recognized as a separate or independent, Dalit Literature as it was measured through the Traditional Aesthetic norms. This was certainly an injustice towards the motif of this new Literature. In fact creation of Dalit literature is the outcome of struggle or quest for identity of Dalit for hundreds of years. The entire foundation of Dalit Literature is based on Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Social Movements and Thoughts. Also the central force of Dalit literature is Dalit Consciousness influenced of Buddhism.

Therefore, a strong desire felt by the Dalit thinker-writers to create their own critical theories dealing with Dalit consciousness was enforced. Dalit Aesthetics is the outcome of a long process happened in the last fifty years. Serious works by Sharankumar Limbale, Omprakash Valmiki, Arjun Dangle, BaburaoBagul, Dr. Yashwant Manohar, Sharad Patil and many more helped to set- up a proper theory of Dalit Consciousness. Since Traditional Indian Aesthetics and Western Aesthetics are inadequate to evaluate Dalit writings, Dalit Literature felt a need to discover its own Aesthetic. Present day Dalit Aesthetic is a rational way of thinking which is far away from imagination.

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Six

Conclusion

The research on *Buddhist Influences on Dalit Literature* charts a remarkable journey spanning five thousand years, exploring the creative expressions of today's Dalits. This odyssey began with marginalized individuals during the last phase of the Neolithic Age, who found themselves pushed to the outskirts of their communities. The awakening brought about by Buddha marked a pivotal transformation, yet the specter of degradation loomed large for untouchables from the first to the fourth century AD. This period of dehumanization persisted until the Twntieth century. It was only through Dr. Ambedkar's emancipation movement that a significant shift occurred, culminating in 1956 with the mass conversion of Dalits back to Buddhism.

Understanding this historical narrative is crucial, as both Dalit and non-Dalit writers and critics hold diverse opinions regarding Dalit history. Dr. Ambedkar employed both historical and literary methodologies in his seminal works, such as *"Caste in India*," "*Who were the Shudras?*" and "*The Untouchables* and *The Revolution and the Counter Revolution.*" These works remain foundational and largely unchallenged in the study of Dalit and marginalized communities across various disciplines, including history, anthropology, sociology, and archaeology.

Current archaeological methods lend support to Ambedkar's viewpoints, especially as new discoveries challenge established theories, such as Wilson's idea of Aryan invasion over indigenous populations. While it's difficult to draw definitive conclusions, ongoing excavations may produce fresh insights into the prehistoric movements of peoples in India. Scholarly contributions from D. D. Kosambi, Romila Thapar, Sharad Patil, and numerous Western historians and anthropologists have further elucidated Dr. Ambedkar's perspective, providing a well-rounded understanding of Dalit history and issues.

Dalit literature has emerged as a distinct literary form that reflects the social realities faced by the Dalit community in India, a group long subjected to hostility and discrimination. The roots of this literary movement can be traced back to the Dalit movement in Maharashtra, pioneered by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. During its early days, Dalit poets and traditional singers began to express Dalit consciousness through Dr. Ambedkar's periodical, *Janata*. By the late 1940s and early 1950s, Dalit literary expression began to gain momentum, marking a significant evolution.

In the 1960s, Dalit literature took shape as a powerful voice of rejection and protest, characterized by themes of Buddhist socialism, humanism, and the philosophy of Ambedkarism. This literary resurgence coincided with a pivotal moment in Indian history: the mass conversion of Dalits to Buddhism in 1956, which brought about profound changes in their socio-economic, cultural, and religious lives. Dr. Ambedkar endorsed a new Buddhist culture known as Navayana, fostering psychological empowerment and educational advancement within the Dalit community. The institutions established by Dr. Ambedkar in Mumbai and

Aurangabad played a crucial role in nurturing Dalit creativity, thereby earning him the title of the Father of Dalit literature and a principal source of inspiration alongside the teachings of the Buddha.

The voices of the marginalized can be traced back in Buddhist literary works, such as the *Therigatha* and the writings of medieval saints. This research delves into the inspirations and influences that have shaped Dalit literature, rooted in the socio-political, economic, and cultural oppression experienced in the country. Anti-caste and anti-establishment movements have provided a solid foundation for Dalit literature, intertwined with the principles of Buddhism.

The social influence theory, notably developed in the 1950s by psychologists like Dr. Herbert Kelman, offers valuable frameworks for analyzing the impacts of these movements on community behavior. Figures such as Mahatma Phule, Rajarshee Shahu Maharaj, Dr. Ambedkar, Periyar Ramasamy Naiker, Iyothi Thass, Narayana Guru, and Birsa Munda have significantly contributed to a socio-political and cultural awakening. Their efforts have promoted education and instilled a sense of self-respect among Dalits. Emerging in the 1950s, Dalit literature addressed pressing social issues and atrocities faced by the community, evolving into a literary movement focused on the welfare of humanity.

This research centers on the significant impact of Buddhism on Dalit literature, drawing upon key works such as Dr. Ambedkar's *"The Buddha and His Dhamma"*, Narada's *"Buddha and His Teachings"*, and P. Laxmi Narasu's *"Essence of Buddhism"*. In addition, various secondary sources were consulted to explore the broader context of Buddhism and its culture. The study also

examines the pre-Buddhist conditions that contributed to the religion's emergence, particularly how Buddhism advocates for the welfare of common people in response to the socio-religious challenges faced by marginalized communities a stance that resonates with both Dr. Ambedkar and contemporary Dalits.

It's crucial to reference modern philosophical schools in this discussion, as they aid in understanding the essence of Buddha's philosophy amidst adversities and his empathy towards human suffering and its alleviation. Central to Buddha's teachings is the individual; thus, he emphasizes issues surrounding suffering, the cultivation of wisdom, moral practices, and contemplative thought. His core principles—impermanence, non-soul, rationality, and Nibbana—are instrumental for a thorough analysis, as these concepts are deeply intertwined with Dalit culture. The unique values of Buddhist Humanism have significantly attracted public support, fostering the promotion of human rights, which is where Dalits historically rallied behind Dr. Ambedkar.

The revival of Buddhism in India began with oriental scholars efforts and archaeological excavations led by Alexander Cunningham, which unearthed a lost golden history and illuminated the country's rich cultural heritage. The invaluable contributions of figures like Colonel Olcott and Anagarik Dhammapala were pivotal in this revival.

Exploring the roots of Dalit poetry reveals that it indeed originated with the rise of Dr. Ambedkar's movement, gaining substantial prominence following widespread conversions. The initial hubs of the Dalit literary movement were Aurangabad and Mumbai, notably within colleges established by Dr. Ambedkar himself. One can trace the voices of Dalit poetry back to the narratives of Theras

(senior Buddhist monks) and Theris (senior Buddhist nuns) from Buddha's era, extending to the literary contributions from medieval saints. Figures such as Ashvaghosha and Sarahapa challenged Hindu dominance through their Buddhist writings in ancient times, while medieval saints like Kabir, Raidas, Tukaram, and Chokhamela echoed themes of oppression. Thus, the connection between contemporary Dalit poetry and both Buddhist and saintly traditions solidifies a foundation for enriching Dalit cultural expression, which in turn aids in the development of its own prosody, symbolism, and mythological frameworks.

Dalit poetry in the post-independence era created a significant impact in the Marathi literary scene, showcasing powerful themes of protest and a strong rejection of the religious dogmas that oppressed the marginalized. These works depicted extreme poverty, dire hunger, and the relentless struggle of Dalits fighting for their identity and dignity. Pioneering poets such as Namdeo Dhasal, Keshav Meshram, Trambak Sakpale, Waman Nimbalkar, Daya Pawar, and Yashwant Manohar laid a robust foundation for Dalit literature, going beyond poetry into a broader literary realm.

Dalit writers wielded sarcasm as a potent tool against the dominance of Hindu hegemony. Central to the cultural growth of the Dalit community was Buddhism, which allowed for a transformation of old traditions into those influenced by Buddhist practices. This evolution, meticulously chronicled in Dalit literature, underscores a consensus among Dalit intellectuals regarding the cultural legacy of Buddhism within their literary works. Academic research by Western scholars like Eleanor Zelliot and Gail Omvedt within the realms of Buddhism and Ambedkarite movements has further validated this connection.

The roots of Dalit poetry can be traced back to the traditional art forms of the Mahar community in Maharashtra. Traditional genres such as singing, Shahiri, Jalasas, and ballads created a fertile ground for Dalit poets, fostering a distinctive poetic voice rich in Dalit consciousness. The influence of Buddhist philosophy is prominently reflected in Dalit poetry, evident through themes of suffering, the law of cause and effect, the Noble Eightfold Path, skepticism towards divine authority and superstition, as well as values rooted in rationalism, impermanence, and Buddhist humanism. These elements, interwoven with rich cultural symbolism, myths, and striking imagery, set Dalit poetry apart, highlighting fundamental themes of rejection, acceptance, protest, and struggle.

Dalit autobiographies paint a harsh reality marked by hunger, poverty, humiliation, oppression, and the ongoing battles faced by Dalits in their communities. These narratives often explore two paradigms: the journey from oppression to empowerment, and the transformation before and after the community's conversion in 1956. Autobiography has long served as a means to articulate one's life experience, but this genre underwent a profound transformation through the work of African-American writers who responded to racial oppression in America and Europe. Likewise, Dalit autobiography redefined traditional literary forms, infusing them with Dalit aesthetic values and crafting compelling accounts of real-world oppression within the hierarchical Indian social structure. The influence of Buddhist literature is evident in the autobiographical narratives by historical figures like Theras and Theris, and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s reflections on selfhood also inspired Dalit writers to share their own stories.

Dalit autobiographies start with personal storytelling, initially focusing on individual experiences and family backgrounds. However, they quickly expand to reflect the broader struggles of the entire Dalit community, portraying a reality marked by hunger, poverty, humiliation, and inhuman conditions prevalent in Dalit neighborhoods. The first notable Dalit narrative was by P.E. Sonkamble, which appeared in episodes in Asmitadarsh in the late 1960s. A milestone came in 1978 with Daya Pawar's complete autobiography, titled *Baluta*, paving the way for a wave of Dalit autobiographies from both men and women.

Dalit women, in particular, shed light on their dual oppression under caste and patriarchy. For this research, eight autobiographies were chosen at random, comprising six in Marathi and two in Hindi and English, including work from two female authors. The Marathi autobiographies vividly recount the lives of Dalits, highlighting their active participation in Dr. Ambedkar's movement. Notable contributions from Dr. Narendra Jadhav and Vasant Moon detail significant events within the Dalit struggle under Dr. Ambedkar's leadership. Other autobiographies narrate the transformations within the Dalit community resulting from this movement, especially the cultural shifts following their conversion to Buddhism.

These narratives offer rich insights into personal and collective experiences, embodying Buddhist philosophies and cultural influences on Dalit lives. Beyond these individual impacts, they celebrate the values of Buddhist humanism and the embrace of artistic expressions within their self-narrations.

Dalit literature and its critique have sparked significant discussion and debate within literary communities across various regional languages. The call for a distinct Dalit

aesthetic was first echoed by writers such as Sharad Patil in his book *Aesthetics of Non-brahmin Literature*. This movement later gained momentum through the contributions of influential figures like Sharankumar Limbale, Dr. Yaswant Manohar, Baburao Bagul, Gangadhar Pantavne, and Omprakash Valmiki, who played pivotal roles in shaping the framework of Dalit literary criticism and aesthetics.

Dalit writers have often voiced concerns regarding the prevailing critical landscape, feeling that many non-Dalit critics, sometimes influenced by biases, were not fostering a healthy environment for their work. In contrast, Dalit literature introduced a unique value system, emphasizing themes such as Dalit consciousness, rejection, acceptance, rationality, lived experiences, suffering, struggle, and protest. Moreover, the reinvention of ideas from myth, along with diverse symbolism and imagery rooted in Buddhist culture, laid a solid foundation for the establishment of a distinct Dalit aesthetic.

The creative expressions and performing arts within Dalit literature are deeply informed by Buddhist philosophy alongside the principles of Ambedkarism. When exploring the concept of separate Dalit aesthetics, both Indian and Western aesthetic theories and critical methods are considered to shed light on their relevance to Dalit writing. However, Dalit writers have largely dismissed these traditional frameworks, arguing that their cultural values and lived experiences differ fundamentally from the imaginative perspectives often employed in mainstream criticism.

Additionally, discussions on Dalit aesthetics inevitably bring up questions of authorship. There is a consensus among Dalit writers that works by non-Dalit writers addressing Dalit themes cannot be classified as true Dalit

literature. Sharankumar Limbale and Omprakash Valmiki have underscored the notion that one must be born a Dalit to genuinely comprehend the pain, injustice, and suffering that accompany Dalit identity. The elements that characterize Dalit aesthetics—such as Dalit consciousness, rejection, protest, suffering, agitation, and revolt—are rooted in Buddhist ideologies and the movement for Dalit emancipation led by Dr. Ambedkar. Thus, these aspects reveal a profound influence of Buddhist philosophy on Dalit literary traditions and their aesthetic framework, highlighting the contributions of Buddhist socialism, values, and humanism.

The language used in Dalit literature has faced significant criticism from non-Dalit writers. However, Dalit intellectuals have stepped forward to defend it, arguing that the language seen in their writings—often characterized by harsh words and explicit imagery—serves as a reflection of the harsh realities imposed by the caste system and the oppression faced by Dalits within this inhumane framework.

As cultural influences shifted, especially with the emergence of Buddhism, traditional Dalit narratives evolved. Characters who were once seen as heroes in mainstream literature often transformed into antagonists in Dalit literature. In contrast, figures who played minor or villainous roles in the conventional context emerged as champions in the Dalit narratives. Sharan Kumar Limbale, in his influential study of Dalit aesthetics, critiques the conventional notions of beauty and truth—rooted in Satyam, Shivam, and Sundaram—for contributing to the exploitation and dehumanization of Dalits. He argues for a rejection of these concepts as bases for evaluating Dalit literature and its aesthetic principles. Instead, Dalit literature embraces a scientific and humanistic approach, advocating for a social

revolution aimed at achieving equality, liberty, fraternity, justice, and opportunity for Dalits. Ultimately, the essence of Dalit literature lies in the pursuit of complete liberation for the Dalit community.

Dalit aesthetics represents a novel theoretical framework crafted through literary expression. Prominent Dalit thinkers and writers have contributed to this theory through prefaces to various works and speeches at literary gatherings. Recently, writers like Dr. Yashwant Manohar, Sharankumar Limbale, and Omprakash Valmiki have shared their insights on Ambedkarite/Dalit Aesthetics, illuminating this emerging literary perspective. A compelling parallel exists between Dalit Aesthetics and Black Aesthetics. This theory emerges from Dr. Ambedkar's movement for Dalit liberation and the cultural transformation driven by Buddhism within the Dalit community. Dalit literature is fundamentally oriented around life—both individual and communal—and serves as a platform for social consciousness. Consequently, ideals of liberty, equality, fraternity, and social justice are integral to Dalit aesthetics.

The aesthetics of Dalit literature hinges on the artist's social awareness and commitment. Furthermore, the role of Dalit aesthetics is to uphold rationalism as a key factor for evaluating and analyzing Dalit literary creativity and art forms.

Findings of the Present Research:

- The emergence of Dalit literature after the 1956 conversions marks a significant influence of the Dalit movement and Buddhism on its formation. Prior to conversion, the groundwork for Dalit literary expression was laid, as illustrated in various Dalit self-narratives,

notably Vasant Moon's "Growing up Untouchables in India."

- A thorough examination of Dalit poetry and select autobiographies reveals that Ambedkarism and Buddhism serve as the cornerstone of Dalit literature. Dalit writers draw inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar, who is regarded as the father of Dalit literature for paving the way for Dalit individuals to articulate their experiences and shape their identity.
- Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism, along with that of millions of his followers, ushered in a profound cultural transformation, evident in the diverse literary forms within Dalit literature. Notably, this transformation is reflected in Dalit autobiographies.
- Marathi Dalit literature has inspired writers across various regional languages, encouraging literary creation in numerous parts of the country.
- Dalit poetry and autobiographies are significantly enriched by the social philosophies of Dr. Ambedkar and Buddha. The literature illustrates a clear distinction between the pre- and post-conversion experiences of Dalits.
- Dalit writers employ innovative symbols and imagery in their poetry, influenced by new cultural paradigms and historical contexts.
- Buddhism, or the Dhamma, has become a guiding principle for Dalits post-conversion. Like the Buddha, Dalit writers strive to elevate the Dalit community from the periphery to the center, aiming for the holistic development of Dalit individuals and their communities—a vision of "Prabuddha Bharat" as dreamt by Dr. Ambedkar.

- Dalit literature embodies the essence of human liberty as envisioned in Buddha's teachings. It champions social values such as liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice.
- By putting Buddhist humanism into action, Dalit literature resonates with values such as metta (loving-kindness), compassion, love, equanimity, and empathy, which permeate its narratives.

The essence of Dalit literature is rooted in protest, rebellion, and a rejection of irrationality, echoing the principles of Buddha's logical non-violence. Rather than advocating for violent upheaval, Dalit literature promotes peace and happiness as envisioned by Buddha. This perspective shapes the hypotheses explored in this research, which is enriched through an examination of selected Dalit poetry and autobiographies, leading to several key findings.

When addressing the limitations of this work, it's essential to acknowledge the vast potential of Dalit literary studies, which span a wide range of interdisciplinary fields. The landscape of Dalit literary creativity has expanded significantly, producing notable works in various regional Indian languages. However, the research encounters challenges due to the scarcity of English translations of this literature. Furthermore, the absence of a commonly accepted Indian language for Dalit literary expression means that researchers often rely on English translations or those in Hindi, the national language. In this study, I have translated numerous Marathi Dalit poems and critical references from Marathi literature into English to support the analysis presented in this doctoral research. These translations aim to maintain as close a connection to the original meanings as possible, ensuring that the arguments put forth in this discussion are well-supported.

Dalit literature has evolved into a well-rounded and mature body of work across its various genres. It emerges from the unique socio-cultural, political, and economic challenges faced by this community. Dalit authors share their personal experiences as well as those of their communities, addressing the myriad issues and struggles they encounter during their path to development. This rich tapestry of experiences opens up vast opportunities for interdisciplinary research that can intersect with literary creativity and the performing arts. Scholars can independently explore historical, anthropological, cultural, and sociological dimensions of its genres.

Moreover, there is a wealth of potential in studies focused on literature, language, symbolism, and the psycho-social foundations of Dalit experiences. The advent of globalization has introduced new complexities into the lives of Dalits, such as liberalization, privatization, and migration from rural areas to urban Dalit enclaves, which pose fresh challenges and opportunities for exploitation.

In-depth research into these areas could illuminate the transformation of Dalits' lives in this corporate and information technology-driven age. The insights gained from such interdisciplinary studies can play a crucial role in highlighting the journey of Dalits, promoting their progress, and restoring essential human values.

Lastly, it's crucial to highlight that the texts examined in this research primarily stem from the early generation of Dalit literature, which has set a benchmark for future creative writers. Over time, Dalit literature has evolved into a comprehensive body of work, witnessing a notable surge in regional language expressions across nearly all major Indian languages. It's worth noting that while Dalit literature across the nation adheres to a similar ethos, it does so within

diverse contexts. Buddhism and Ambedkarism serve as a driving force for writers contributing to this literary movement.

As time progresses, Dalit writers are dedicating their efforts to uncover the unsung heroes of the Dalit movement, individuals who may or may not have had direct ties to Dr. Ambedkar during his lifetime. Those who have championed the cause of Bahujan welfare throughout history deserve recognition in Dalit writings. Contemporary authors are applying their creative insights to explore various Dalit heroes and their contributions toward dismantling caste systems, promoting equality, and advocating for social justice.

Unfortunately, at the grassroots level, political influences often tend to transform these historical figures into deities, birthing a ritualistic culture that Dalit literature has moved away from. It is imperative that these unsung heroes be explored through creative writing and scholarly research. Writers and researchers should passionately connect these figures to the broader Dalit movement, ensuring that the works and philosophies of these legendary heroes are documented and examined.

Critics within Dalit literature must identify the gaps and shortcomings in the movement to refine its methodology. Some genres within Dalit literature are still struggling to gain traction due to various constraints. Fiction, in particular, remains less explored compared to poetry, short stories, autobiographies, and non-fiction. Recognizing the significant influence that fiction can have on public thought, we can draw optimistic comparisons to Afro-American fiction. However, when we consider the parallels between Dalit and Afro-American literature, we often notice the absence of robust Dalit literary fiction.

Translating Dalit literary works from regional languages into Hindi and English could help bridge this divide. Novels, being a time-intensive genre, demand patience and dedication, rigorously testing an author's creativity and their grasp of philosophical and historical contexts surrounding the Dalit movement. The exploration of Buddhism and Ambedkarism through fiction is an urgent endeavor that needs to be pursued.

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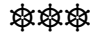

Index

Acceptance: 3, 5, 8, 130, 132, 151, 213, 236, 259, 261, 296, 298

Aesthetics: 136, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 254, 255, 256, 261, 281, 282, 285, 287, 288, 298

Afro-American:1, 13, 42, 182, 183, 257, 285, 304

Agitation: 9, 248, 259, 273, 274, 299,

Agriculture: 4, 16, 19, 24, 25, 86, 87

Ajivika: 82, 83, 122

Ambedkar, Dr. Babasaheb: 1, 2,3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 67, 115, 144, 168, 292

Ambedkar' Philosophy: 41, 115, 121, 147, 211, 247, 261, 271, 273, 283, 286

Ambedkar's movement: 32, 36, 41, 42, 50, 60, 67, 112, 119, 152, 160, 164, 171, 192, 201, 206, 210, 213, 221, 227, 228, 233, 235, 240, 270, 272, 273, 288, 291, 294, 295, 297, 299, 300,

Ambedkarism: 34, 36, 44, 48, 50, 51, 121, 130, 136, 235, 254, 292, 298, 301, 303, 305,

Ambedkarite Aesthetics: 249, 286

Ambedkarite: 60, 89, 117, 120, 121, 132, 134, 135, 147, 150, 151, 156, 161, 162, 168, 169, 171, 173, 187, 211, 212, 214, 222, 227, 235, 236, 239, 249, 257, 259, 260, 286, 287, 295, 300,

Antya/Antyaja: 11, 13, 22, 52, 274

Aryan invasion: 22, 292

Asmitadarsh: 46, 60, 130, 240, 247, 297

Atishudra: 5, 11

Atrocities: 1, 55, 60, 63, 65, 107, 131, 188, 192, 245, 253, 258, 272, 293

Authorship (of Dalit Literature): 8, 256, 298,

Avarna: 11, 22

Bhakti Tradition: 56

Black Aesthetics: 285, 300

Brahamana/Brahmaya: 54, 78, 79, 83, 104, 117, 128, 246, 282

Brahma: 61, 102, 116, 282

Brahman/Bhramin: 11, 27, 28, 30, 31, 57, 76, 77, 79, 80, 86, 87, 91, 101, 106, 107, 108, 109, 116, 165, 201, 207, 267

Brahmanism: 28, 39, 54, 55, 56, 77, 81, 82, 84, 108, 109, 112, 122, 141, 144, 151, 154, 251, 255, 261, 271, 284

British (Government/ policies/ politics/ education): 12, 40, 45, 47, 66, 109, 111, 122

Broken Men: 4, 5, 12, 13, 21, 22, 23, 24, 24, 26, 27, 33, 39, 49, 52, 66, 73, 107, 121, 141

Buddha: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 25, 32, 39, 40, 42, 43, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 61, 66, 67, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 110, 111, 112, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 127, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 136, 141, 144, 145, 147, 148, 150, 151, 152, 154, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 173, 174, 175, 183, 184, 192, 197, 200, 208, 211, 213, 218, 222, 227, 229, 230, 231, 232, 234, 235, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 252, 253, 254, 259, 261, 263, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 281, 283, 286, 287, 291, 293, 294, 295, 301, 302,

Buddhism: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 27, 28, 32, 33, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 48, 49, 54, 55, 67, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 80, 82, 83, 84, 87, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 114, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 126, 127, 128, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 136, 138, 140, 14, 144, 146, 147, 149, 150, 151, 152, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 160, 161, 162, 164, 166, 167, 168, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 178, 180, 182, 183, 184, 186, 188, 190, 191, 193, 194, 196, 198, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 206, 208, 210, 212, 213, 216, 218, 219, 222, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 235, 236, 238, 240, 241, 246, 248, 253, 254, 258, 260, 263, 265, 270, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 280, 282, 284, 286, 288, 291, 292, 293, 294, 294, 297, 299, 300, 301, 303, 305

Buddhist Aesthetics: 276

Buddhist Consciousness: 130, 276

Buddhist Culture: 5, 9, 17, 135, 213, 221, 228, 230, 233, 238, 239, 242, 245, 248, 259, 270, 275, 292, 293, 298

Buddhist Humanism: 8, 9, 40, 44, 113, 160, 128, 161, 175, 193, 219, 222, 225, 231, 239,

254, 271, 278, 283, 284, 286, 292, 294, 296, 297, 299, 302

Buddhist Philosophy: 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 41, 89, 90, 94, 97, 106, 117, 122, 132, 135, 179, 213, 227, 232, 235, 248, 254, 271, 275, 276, 281, 286, 287, 292, 294, 296, 298, 299

Buddhist Symbolism: 8, 167, 168, 170, 228, 230, 239

Caste system: 1, 3, 15, 27, 28, 30, 31, 49, 50, 57, 58, 64, 66, 129, 130, 150, 153, 157, 166, 171, 174, 198, 210, 212, 227, 242, 245, 255, 259, 265, 273, 299, 304

Caste: 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 39, 40, 43, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 55, 56, 57, 58, 64, 66, 67, 77, 90, 106. 112, 115, 118, 120, 129, 130, 131, 141, 148, 150, 153, 156, 157, 161, 166, 167, 171, 174, 178, 185, 186, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 198, 204, 205, 207, 210, 212, 226, 227, 232, 233, 241, 242, 245, 247, 249, 253, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 261, 262, 265, 266, 268, 272, 273, 278, 280, 283, 284, 291, 293, 297, 299, 304

Charvaka: 82, 83, 122,

Chatrapati Shahu Maharaj: 2, 32, 39, 47, 293,

Chaturvarna: 11, 13, 14, 78, 178, 246

Chokhamela (Saint): 5, 128,213

Civilization (s): 7, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 90,

Class(es): 12, 18, 21, 28, 30, 31, 35, 43, 45, 50, 51, 66, 73, 76, 78, 79, 87, 89, 90, 97, 101, 110, 119, 129, 133, 164, 234, 239, 247

Compassion (Karuna): 116, 117, 129, 130, 134, 157, 161, 162, 163, 169, 197, 222, 223, 225, 248, 254, 277, 278, 286, 302, 319

Consciousness: 34, 40, 52, 53, 59, 60, 80, 82, 97, 99, 100, 103, 104, 121, 129, 132, 196, 204, 214, 228, 235, 239, 242, 248, 254, 266, 267, 270, 271, 272, 300

Contemplation (Samadhi): 66, 88, 102, 144, 150, 151, 186, 190, 196, 207, 211, 212, 213, 217, 218, 220, 267, 294

Conversion (to Buddhism) (1956): 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 14, 32, 33, 38, 39, 41, 67, 89, 110, 11, 112, 112, 113, 114, 1115, 117, 119, 120, 123, 126, 133, 168, 171, 172, 174, 178, 184, 191, 192, 200, 201, 203, 213, 215, 216, 222, 228, 230, 233, 234, 236, 239, 240, 242, 253, 254, 258, 270, 274, 287, 291, 292, 294, 296, 297, 300, 301

Culture: 3, 5, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 29, 35, 37, 40, 45, 58, 73, 81, 82, 86, 87, 91, 121, 122, 127, 131, 147, 149, 159, 167, 198, 201, 214, 221, 228, 229, 231, 236, 239, 147, 258, 263, 272, 273, 279, 283, 285, 304

Dalit Aesthetics: 3, 9, 212, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 251, 252, 263, 274, 276, 279, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 298, 299, 300

Dalit Autobiography: 6, 8, 9, 65, 66, 178, 179, 180, 186, 188, 189, 190, 210, 212, 230, 239, 240, 241, 272, 296

Dalit Consciousness (Dalit Chetana):3, 5, 9, 14, 33, 40, 43, 44, 53, 58, 60, 67, 126, 153, 154, 174, 188, 189, 242, 248, 255, 256, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 268, 269, 270, 288, 292, 296, 298, 299

Dalit Culture: 294

Dalit Emancipation Movement: 254, 259, 286, 291, 299

Dalit Essays: 1, 2, 34, 43, 67, 188, 245

Dalit Literary Criticism: 3, 9, 10, 34, 51, 129, 247, 252, 259, 262, 272, 273, 274, 298

Dalit Literary Movement: 35, 39, 67, 134, 145, 147, 151, 188, 212, 213, 239, 245, 258, 273, 274, 276, 283, 293, 294, 303,

Dalit Literature: 1, 2 ,3, 4, 5 , 6, 7, 9 ,11, 14, 15, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 47, 48, 50,51, 52, 58, 59, 61,66, 121, 126, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 135, 144, 145, 148, 153, 154, 161, 162, 164, 174, 175, 178, 179, 186, 241, 245, 246, 247, 248, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 262, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 291, 292, 293, 295, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304

Dalit Movement: 35, 39, 41, 48, 51, 59, 60, 66, 67, 111, 112, 119, 126, 131,145, 151, 160, 126, 131, 203, 206, 226, 242, 247, 253, 254, 259, 260, 265, 266, 273, 292, 300, 303, 304, 305,

Dalit Novel: 1, 2, 34, 38, 43, 44, 59, 64, 67, 135, 248, 251, 253, 255, 256, 257, 300, 304

Dalit Panthers: 13, 48, 240,

Dalit Poetry: 3, 6, 8, 10, 43, 44, 54, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 67, 126, 128, 129, 130, 131, 134, 135, 137, 141, 144, 145, 146, 147, 150, 152, 160, 167, 168, 173, 174, 175, 255, 256, 263, 265, 272, 294, 295, 296, 301, 302

Dalit Short Stories: 1, 2, 59, 63, 64, 67, 187, 212, 245, 248, 253, 254, 296, 304

Dalit Theatre & Plays: 1, 37, 63, 64, 65, 121, 126, 184, 248, 253

Dalit Thinkers (intellectuals): 2, 35, 136, 187, 206, 240, 284, 288, 300

Dalitness: 9, 11, 28, 32, 33, 67, 141, 142, 256, 257, 258, 266

Dallit Saints: 54, 58

Decline of Buddhism: 106, 107, 108, 122, 228, 232,

Depressed (Classes): 12, 13, 45, 66, 267

Dhamma: 2, 40, 73, 88, 90, 93, 94, 95, 104, 115, 117, 120, 121,

122, 127, 132, 134, 167, 171, 173, 174, 175, 183, 184, 213, 229, 230, 231, 233, 235, 277, 287, 301

Dhammachakka Pavatana (turning of Dhamma Wheel): 93, 136, 170, 171, 229

Dhammakranti: 40, 229, 239

Dhammapala, Anagarika: 109, 122, 294

Dhasal Namdeo: 13, 52, 61, 120, 128, 131, 135, 137, 138, 142, 143, 145, 148, 152, 154, 157, 158, 161, 162, 164, 165, 170, 174, 163, 278, 295

Discrimination: 1, 2, 10, 32, 40, 50, 51, 52, 55, 56, 57, 60, 76, 101, 113, 117, 128, 136, 144, 153, 154, 163, 164, 172, 174, 192, 193, 198, 210, 212, 232, 257, 278, 283, 284, 292

Displaced Communities: 4, 5, 24, 25, 49, 141

Education: 5, 31, 32, 35, 41, 42, 45, 46, 47, 58, 60, 79, 87, 103, 111, 119, 123, 201, 202, 203, 204, 207, 209, 210, 211, 220, 221, 231, 239, 266, 268, 292, 293

Emancipation: 5, 36, 39, 51, 67, 94, 102, 105, 110, 111, 114, 115, 119, 160, 201, 254

Empathy: 142, 161, 252, 254, 278, 286, 294, 302,

Enlightenment (Nibbana): 8, 9, 87, 89, 90, 94, 95, 97, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 106, 117, 127, 134, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 219, 222, 230, 294

Equal Opportunity: 1, 2, 52, 198, 255, 283, 286, 300

Equality: 1, 2, 6, 13, 39, 40, 44, 50, 52, 56, 57, 58, 65, 78, 90, 101, 106, 111, 113, 114, 116, 117, 118, 128, 129, 132, 133, 134, 137, 147, 163 164, 165, 175, 226, 228, 231, 245, 248, 253, 255, 257, 259, 271, 273, 276, 277, 282, 285, 286, 299, 300, 301, 304

Equanimity: 134, 248, 254, 278, 286, 302,

Existential Philosophy: 3

Fraternity: 2, 13, 39, 52, 56, 57, 65, 90, 106, 129, 132, 134, 163, 164, 165, 175, 226, 227, 228, 231, 248, 253, 255, 259, 261, 271, 273, 276, 277, 282, 283, 285, 286, 299, 300, 301

Fundamental rights: 11, 31, 46, 66, 263

Gandhi, Mahatma: 12, 113, 114, 183

Guru Arjandev: 57

Guru, Narayana: 2, 32, 39, 48, 254, 293

Harappa: 15, 17, 18, 19, 29,

Harijan: 12

Hindu hegemony: 34, 44, 131, 179, 191, 295

Human values: 2, 35, 39, 56, 65, 106, 118, 127, 129, 130, 134, 163, 164, 165, 167, 191, 192, 210, 219, 226, 231, 242, 253, 254, 258, 259, 275, 277, 282, 283, 284, 286, 303,

Ignorance (Avijja): 8, 96, 103, 137, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 198, 199, 200, 242, 253, 272

Imagery: 3, 6, 296, 298, 299, 301,

Impermanence (Anicca): 8, 9, 39, 97, 98, 99, 100, 134, 154, 155, 156, 175, 216, 217, 218, 294, 296

Indus (civilization): 7, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 28, 60, 66, 109, 113,

Injustice: 2, 65, 131, 137, 138, 144, 145, 146, 153, 178, 192, 241, 247, 253, 264, 265, 269, 273, 279, 280, 281, 282, 288, 299

Inspiration: 2, 7, 32, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 48, 50, 51, 52, 59, 64, 126, 129, 132, 133, 151, 173, 187, 239, 260, 277, 266, 293, 301,

Invasion: 4, 21, 22, 23

Jadhav, Dr. Narendra: 191, 196, 203, 204, 212, 215, 225, 235, 236, 270, 297

Jain Philosophy: 83, 84, 85, 89

Jain Saint: 85

Jatava, D.R.: 189, 191, 194, 195, 198, 202, 203, 207, 211, 213. 214, 216, 221, 222, 226, 230, 231, 232, 266

Justice: 2, 6, 13, 39, 65, 90, 106, 118, 129, 132, 134, 163, 164, 175, 207, 226, 228, 231, 234, 248, 254, 255, 258, 259, 261, 271, 273, 276, 277, 282, 283, 285, 286, 300, 301, 304

Kabirdas: 56, 128

Kamble, Shantabai: 189, 191, 201, 209, 212, 213, 221, 222, 223, 226, 240, 266, 297

Khshatriya: 11, 78, 79, 85, 86, 165

Language (of Dalit Literature): 9, 14, 17, 25, 35, 54, 60, 61, 62, 63, 126, 127, 128, 129, 131, 185, 186, 189, 229, 245, 246, 147, 249, 253, 257, 278, 279, 280, 288, 297, 299, 301, 302, 303, 304,

Lanjewar, Jyoti: 135, 136, 140, 144, 146, 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 155, 159, 162, 163, 166, 171, 172, 174, 264

Law of Cause and Effect (Praticca Sammutpad): 2, 102, 103, 134, 141, 170, 192, 296

Law of Kamma: 96, 104, 105, 106, 134, 147, 148, 194, 206, 211

Liberty: 2, 35, 39, 50, 52, 56, 65, 90, 106, 114, 118, 129, 134, 157, 160, 163, 164, 175, 200, 211, 219, 220, 226, 228, 231, 238, 248, 253, 255, 258, 259, 261, 271, 273, 276, 277, 282, 283, 285, 286, 299, 300, 301,

Limbale Sharankumar: 9, 41, 50, 51, 52, 58, 60. 188, 191, 193, 194, 199, 208, 211, 217, 218, 221, 223, 224, 232, 233, 243, 246, 254, 255, 256, 259, 260, 269, 270, 271, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 288, 298, 299, 300

Love: 126, 134, 142, 143, 151, 161, 162, 163, 179, 199, 222, 224, 225, 231, 254, 278, 286, 302

Mahar(s): 26, 31, 32, 55, 56, 114, 126, 131, 188, 189, 191, 193, 201, 203, 208, 213, 227, 296

Mahavira (Jain): 74, 77, 82, 83, 84, 85, 122

Manohar, Dr. Yashwant: 9, 12, 41, 52, 61, 121, 128, 136, 140, 144, 147, 149, 155, 159, 163, 167, 174, 187, 228, 249, 257, 264, 283, 286, 287, 288, 295, 298, 300

Manusmriti: 26, 28, 273,

Marginalization/marginalized/ marginality: 1, 4, 7, 14, 28, 32, 33, 39, 65, 90, 110, 129, 131, 145, 153, 161, 166, 175, 182, 183, 192, 193, 198, 216, 225, 247, 252, 253, 257, 259, 265, 272, 277, 278, 281, 283, 291, 293, 294, 295,

Marx Karl / Marxist theory (Marxism): 3, 29, 33, 42, 44, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 95, 115, 119, 132, 249,

Meshram, Keshv: 55, 61, 64, 128, 135, 138, 146, 153, 154, 174, 234, 264, 283, 295

Metta: 130, 134, 161, 162, 163, 222, 224, 225, 254, 278, 286, 302

Mohenjo Daro: 15, 18, 19, 20,

Moon, Vasant: 191, 194, 205, 209, 211, 214, 215, 218, 221, 224, 227, 233, 234, 235, 239, 240, 297, 300, 306

Morality/Moral Codes (Shila): 2, 9, 43, 57, 74, 84, 85, 95, 97, 104, 105, 106, 116, 117, 121, 122, 132, 134, 144, 147, 148, 150, 175, 198, 206, 208, 209, 219, 220, 222, 229, 251, 271, 273, 275, 276, 278, 283, 287, 294

Morality: 2, 74, 75, 85, 95, 121, 122, 132, 150, 273, 275, 275, 276, 283, 287,

Movement: 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 23, 25, 32, 33, 35, 36, 38, 39, 41, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 51, 57, 59, 76, 107, 109, 110, 111, 121, 122, 133, 148, 160, 203, 210, 219, 240, 246, 254, 259, 269, 286, 292, 293, 298, 304

Munda, Birasa: 48, 293,

Myths: 6, 9, 168, 247, 281, 296

Naga tribe: 4, 5, 115, 274

Naikar, Periyar: 3, 32, 39, 254, 293,

Neo-Buddhist: 6, 9, 13, 131, 134, 215, 230, 238, 239, 245

Nimbalkar, Waman: 9, 13, 34, 40, 41, 50, 58, 61, 128, 132, 136, 139, 149, 160, 162, 169, 174, 186, 257, 265, 271, 277, 295

Nomadic Tribe: 4, 16, 21, 23, 24, 25

Non-brahmin: 32, 48, 298

Non-Soul (Anatta): 8, 9, 40, 97, 99, 100, 151, 156, 175, 213, 294

Omvedt, Gail: 19, 29, 78, 81, 104, 118, 119, 295,

Oppression: 1, 119, 129, 136, 137, 141, 158, 178, 183, 186, 192, 241, 257, 259, 266, 271, 273, 277, 282, 293, 295, 296, 297, 299,

Outcaste: 52, 161, 185, 189, 191, 211, 212

Pawar, Daya: 52, 60, 61, 62, 65, 128, 136, 139, 143, 151, 153, 155, 158, 163, 166, 169, 173, 174, 188, 191, 199, 205, 206, 208, 209, 212, 217, 219, 221, 240, 266, 269, 295, 297

Pawar, Urmila: 191, 196, 198, 204, 205, 212, 215, 216, 221, 236, 237, 238, 240, 267

Periyar Ramasami: 2, 32, 39, 254, 293,

Philosophy: 39, 50, 56, 83, 118, 192, 241, 249, 250, 282, 287

Phule, Mahatma Jyotirao: 2, 5, 12, 32, 39, 45, 47, 56, 66, 103, 121, 122, 201, 232, 254, 259, 267, 273, 283, 286, 287, 293,

Poverty: 35, 49, 60, 128, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 178, 192, 193, 194, 198, 202, 212, 241, 253, 266, 272, 295, 296, 297

Pre-historic: 15, 16, 23, 66, 74, 81

Primitive: 24, 28, 29, 23, 24

Protest: 3, 9, 33, 34, 55, 56, 60, 67, 118, 119, 128, 129, 130, 132, 141, 143, 144, 153, 154, 159, 174, 247, 248, 253, 259, 261, 271, 272, 279, 283, 285, 292, 295, 296, 298, 299, 302

Rationalism: 5, 54, 55, 57, 84, 87, 122, 192, 200, 201, 214, 233, 242, 253, 261, 287, 296, 300

Ravidas/Raidas (Saint): 57, 128

Rejection: 3, 8, 9, 43, 44, 54, 84, 86, 110, 117, 118, 119, 122, 126, 128, 129, 134, 151, 152, 153, 154, 159, 174, 213, 242, 248, 259, 261, 270, 271, 272, 292, 295, 296, 298, 299, 302

Revival of Buddhism: 7, 40, 73, 107, 109, 110, 112, 294

Revolt: 9, 57, 58, 149, 150, 151, 171, 200, 259, 264, 271, 273, 299

Revolution: 4, 16, 32, 41, 42, 46, 55, 58, 60, 66, 67, 91, 104, 107, 112, 115, 119, 121, 123, 126, 130, 132, 149, 150, 151, 179, 186, 201, 214, 252, 254, 258, 274, 276, 283, 284, 285, 291, 299

Saddhamma: 117, 161, 222, 277,

Saint Literature (tradition): 8, 57, 58, 59, 275

Samana Culture: 73, 77, 81, 82, 83, 84, 104, 122

Samkhya Philosophy: 78, 79

Sathe, Annabhau: 33, 51, 59, 60, 63, 64

Satya Shodhak Philosophy: 47

Savarna: 11, 255,

Scheduled Caste Federation: 115, 120, 233

Scheduled Caste: 4, 12, 13, 66, 115, 120

Scheduled Tribe: 4, 13,

Scientific (point of view): 5, 21, 118, 261, 271, 283, 284, 299

Self-respect: 31, 32, 36, 39, 40, 41, 44, 45, 48, 54, 61, 74, 107, 113, 114, 121, 140, 144, 193, 201, 204, 205, 260, 270, 284, 293

Shudra: 5, 11, 15, 16, 22, 23, 25, 26, 31, 78, 79, 90, 101, 102, 115, 142, 143, 165, 274, 282, 291

Social Awareness: 59, 60, 285, 300

Society: 1, 4, 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 27, 30, 31, 32, 40, 45, 46, 50, 52, 53, 75, 78, 81, 82, 90, 96, 103, 110, 109, 111, 112, 113, 115, 117, 118, 120, 122, 129, 131, 137, 141, 143, 145, 147, 148, 154, 156, 156, 161, 163, 166, 171, 190, 195, 204, 219, 222, 228, 229, 247, 251, 254, 256, 258, 259, 260, 262, 265, 266, 272, 275, 278, 279, 283, 284, 286,

Socio-cultural: 2, 3, 5, 7, 13, 14, 15, 29, 32, 36, 123, 179, 182, 198, 252, 258, 259, 261, 262, 276, 284, 302, 303,

Socio-economic: 32, 40, 51, 138, 156, 192, 201, 248, 256, 258, 260, 273, 274, 275, 292,

Socio-political: 34, 41, 45, 46, 58, 111, 118, 210, 260, 263, 293,

Socio-religious: 81, 90, 121, 294,

Subaltern: 33

Suffering (Dukkha): 3, 6, 8, 9, 35, 63, 65, 80, 87, 88, 89, 91, 92, 94, 95, 102, 103, 129, 130, 134, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 144, 146, 148, 150, 151, 155, 156, 157, 159, 161, 165, 167, 169, 170, 192, 193, 196, 197, 198, 200, 211, 212, 241, 247, 248, 253, 254, 255, 256, 259, 261, 263, 269, 271, 272, 273, 280, 285, 286, 294, 296, 298, 299

Symbols/Symbolism: 3, 6, 8, 9, 19, 32, 95, 135, 167, 168, 170, 171, 172, 173, 175, 228, 229, 230, 233, 239, 257, 259, 295, 296, 298, 301, 303

Thass, Iyothi: 2, 48, 110, 254, 293,

The Constitution /constitutional: 11, 13, 32, 34, 46, 51, 67, 111, 115, 119, 164, 167, 174, 258, 276, 286

The Doctrine of Impermanence (Anicca): 8, 9, 97, 98, 99, 100, 154, 155, 156, 175, 216, 217, 218, 294, 296, 304

The Five Precepts: 2, 85, 95, 116, 134, 147, 208, 229, 234

The Four Noble Truths: 2, 94, 95, 134, 173, 197, 272

The Middle Way: 93, 94, 100, 150, 209, 239

The Noble Eightfold Path: 2, 8, 34, 59, 63, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 100, 103, 116, 114, 144, 148,

150, 157, 200, 202, 219, 230, 296

Thergatha & Therigatha: 53, 127, 160, 183, 184, 293

Tribal war: 23, 66

Tukaram (Saint): 6, 128, 275

Twenty Two Vows: 2, 5, 6, 7, 116, 131, 134, 175, 231, 216, 237, 242,

Typical Indian Social Hierarchy: 1, 2, 5, 11, 13, 32, 33, 40, 53, 54, 64, 65, 67, 178, 186, 191, 241, 246, 247, 253, 255, 272

Unconscious: 172, 206,

Unscientific: 271

Untouchable/Untouchability: 1, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 32, 33, 39, 43, 45, 46, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 66, 107, 112, 113, 115, 120, 125, 133, 135, 136, 157, 172, 191, 193, 198, 203, 205, 211, 221, 228, , 244, 253, 257, 272, 274, 282, 291, 300

Vaishya: 11, 78, 79, 165

Valmiki, Omprakash: 9, 13, 50, 52, 58, 62, 64, 143, 189, 191, 195, 200, 204, 212, 220, 221, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 235, 240, 254, 255, 256, 261, 262, 267, 268, 277, 284, 286, 288, 298, 299, 300

Varna: 14, 19, 22, 23, 33, 54, 79, 90,104, 141, 148, 261, 282,

Varnashrama: 1, 5, 6, 33, 90, 134, 214

Veda(s): 11, 15, 19, 22, 31, 76, 77, 78, 80, 82, 83, 84, 87, 122, 127

Vedic Philosophy: 77, 82

Wisdom (panna): 8, 54, 97, 103, 117, 134, 141, 144, 145, 146, 156, 159, 163, 173, 200, 203, 216, 217, 219, 221, 227, 263, 269, 278, 294

Zelliot, Ellinor: 13, 33, 35, 46, 112, 120, 131, 133, 135, 295